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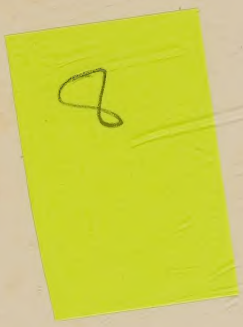
THE NARESBOROUGH VICTORY



MARTHA BENT UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

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Seventy Pounds Prize Tale

THE

NARESBOROUGH VICTORY

A Story in Five Parts

BY

REV. T. KEYWORTH

AUTHOR OF "DICK, THE NEWSBOY," "INFRA DIG.," "GREEN AND GREY," ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

"Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow."

T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON AND EDINBURGH

AND

The United Kingdom Band of Hope Union

60 OLD BAILEY, LONDON, E.C.

1903

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE NARESBOROUGH VICTORY is one of eight Prize Tales, which have together secured a sale of upwards of 150,000. The Publishers consider that the whole series is specially well adapted for Young People's Libraries, Prizes, Birthday, and other Presents.

The titles of the other Tales are as follows :—

FRANK OLDFIELD, *by Rev. T. P. Wilson, M.A.*

TIM'S TROUBLES, *by M. A. Paull.*

SOUGHT AND SAVED, *by M. A. Paull.*

LIONEL FRANKLIN'S VICTORY, *by E. Van Sommer.*

THROUGH STORM TO SUNSHINE, *by W. J. Lacey.*

OWEN'S HOBBY, *by Elmer Burleigh.*

EVERY-DAY DOINGS, *by Hellena Richardson.*

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Part I.

The Mystery at Bettenham Vicarage.

By the Rev. Joseph Fenwick, M.A.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEALED PACKET.

I REMEMBER that it was on a Friday night; for I had finished both my sermons, and was quietly reading in my study, when I heard the door-bell ring. It must have been about seven o'clock. The night was too stormy for anybody to pay a visit of ceremony or of pleasure, so I felt certain that some parishioner was ill. I began to wonder who it was, but could think of nobody who was likely to send for me specially, unless it was Mrs. Ryan. She was always worse in a storm, and thought she would die. Many a long walk had I taken at all hours with her husband, who was a meek and silent man, always ready to do his wife's bidding, and fetch the vicar before she breathed her last. Well, poor woman, she was often very ill, though she lived many years after she had said good-bye to all her friends. "It must be Ryan," I said to

myself, as the rain battered against the window ; and I pictured to myself how wet he would be, and how sorry he would look when he made his request that I should kindly go and see his wife, who had been taken bad again, and was dying. He always looked the same, and I believe always used the same form of words.

My study window shook, and the rain seemed to rush against it furiously. "This is a night for leggings and mackintosh," I muttered, as I laid down my book, and waited for a knock at my study door. The knock came. "Come in," I cried. Jane the housemaid opened the door, and brought me a packet, which she said a man had left ; and as there was no answer required, he had gone away again.

I must confess that I felt very much relieved at the message, for the house shook as the storm grew more violent. The man had left no name ; he said it was not necessary. I told Jane it was all right, and she went away. The packet was enclosed in a large envelope, which was addressed to me in the usual manner : "The Rev. Joseph Fenwick, M.A., Bettenham Vicarage." I say in the usual manner, not meaning that Bettenham Vicarage was a sufficient postal address. Letters from a distance needed the

addition of "Cheshire," or "near Chester," according to the taste of the writer.

This envelope was addressed in a strange hand, and the packet was rather bulky. What could it be, and who was the sender? My wife now entered the study, and said she hoped I was not going out on such a night as that, for the rain was coming down in torrents. "I hope not," I replied, as I proceeded to open the envelope; Mary, that is my wife, standing near and watching me. Inside the envelope was a smaller one carefully sealed, and instead of an address I saw these words written: "Please to read the accompanying note." "Mary," I said, "this is mysterious." Then I added, "Would it not be better for me to be left alone until I have seen what it is all about?" Of course I was only joking. I knew that the dear woman would just as soon have thought of going out into the furious storm as leaving me until everything had been read and discussed. So she sat beside me, and told me to be quick, for it was Friday night, and she had many things to do.

"Please to read the accompanying note." Inside the envelope which I had opened was the note referred to. It was very short and very vague, as the reader may judge, for here I reproduce it:—

"REV. SIR,—I ask you to keep the enclosed packet for twelve months, unless I claim it before that time. If a messenger comes before the twelve months are expired, and he mentions the word 'Excelsior,' please give him the packet without asking any questions. But if it be not claimed, I beg you open it, and read for yourself what is written there.—Rev. Sir, I remain, ONE WHO TRUSTS YOU."

The note was dated, but no address was given. I read it twice, and my wife read it; then we examined the packet, which, as I said before, was sealed, but with a plain seal. The outer envelope was also re-examined, but it threw no light upon the matter which was perplexing us.

Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I sat and looked at Mary, and she looked at me; and I daresay we both felt as if we were dreaming. I did not know the writing, and could think of nobody in the parish, or in fact out of it, who was likely to impose upon me a duty like this. Mary rose and proposed that she should go and question Jane about the person who brought the packet. I know that I have no more than a healthy share of inquisitiveness, but I did think it best that I should ring for

Jane, and ask her in the study about the messenger. Jane was a Welsh girl, who had been with us a year or so. She was a good servant, but had very confused notions about the English language. My wife said sometimes that it was like book-English upside down. Jane would use elegant expressions for commonplace things, and often the expressions were slightly wrong. She had learned her English at school, and had always been accustomed to use the language of the ancient Britons at home and among her friends in Carnarvonshire.

Jane could tell us nothing which was likely to lessen our perplexity. It was a man who had brought the packet, but what kind of man she could not say. My wife wanted to know whether it was a common man or a gentleman; but this was a nice distinction which Jane could not appreciate in English. She said he was moderate, like Owen Griffiths of Llansydd; but as we knew nothing about either Owen Griffiths or Llansydd, we were not much enlightened by the comparison. The more Jane was questioned the more obscure she became; so we had to fall back upon her first simple statement, that a man had given her the packet and said it was for the Rev. Joseph Fenwick, and no answer was required, and then he had walked away.

After Jane had left us we sat together discussing the matter over again. My wife was always busy on Friday nights, and I was almost surprised to see how contentedly she sat with me, while she expressed her wonder at the whole business, and asked me what I intended to do. I could not see that any alternative was left me. If I had been asked whether I would take the packet on the conditions named in the note, I could have refused; but my mysterious correspondent gave me no such opportunity. I told Mary that there was no room for choice — I must act according to my instructions. I could not throw the packet into the fire, and, of course, I must not open it until the stipulated time. I know she agreed with me in all I said, though I dare say she was vexed to see a covering of paper which was hiding from us a puzzle which had been thrust under our noses without our will or consent.

She said she hated mysteries and secrets of all descriptions; so she did, as I knew quite well. But in a case like this we could not help ourselves. I should have been pleased to have known all about my correspondent; but, as I have often said, God has put us in a world where many things are concealed;

and some kinds of ignorance are a cultivation, just as some kinds of knowledge are.

I returned the packet and note to the outer envelope, and decided to place it just as it was in my safe. The safe is stamped with an assurance that it is fire-proof and thief-proof; but it is by an obscure maker, and I have sometimes wondered whether it would successfully pass through a severe ordeal, fiery or otherwise. When I had these book-shelves made, I ordered the safe to be inserted among them, like a small cupboard, and it was painted and grained like the woodwork.

Mary said, "It may be a parcel of stolen bank notes or of forged ones. It is a new way to escape detection when people have done something wrong; they have only to make a mystery of things and confide in the vicar, and he will respect their confidence and guard their secrets in his own treasure-chest."

She was fond of twitting me about that safe. It is true that I went to Chester for an altogether different purpose, and was tempted to purchase the safe at an auction, when I happened to see how cheaply it was likely to be sold. Mary was disappointed at what I did not buy that day, and

always seemed to vent her spite upon the guiltless safe.

When the packet had been put away, and Mary had left me, I could not help wondering what this strange thing meant. The packet might contain a will, and perhaps for want of it some of my fellow-creatures would suffer; or it might contain deeds of an important character; or it might have documents in it which were needed for the vindication of somebody who was being charged with crime. It was well for me that my sermons were finished, for I could not have thought or written about anything that night except the sealed packet. I soon fetched it from its resting-place again, and tried to remember whether or not the writing was wholly strange to me. Some of the capitals were like those of Fredericks, who was at Cambridge with me; but Fredericks died long ago. Then there was a resemblance between some of the curves and the writing of Schooles, who was a fellow-curate in Liverpool; but Schooles went to Australia, and was doing well in Victoria at the time. Then I thought of the best families about Bettenham; for I had an instinctive feeling that the papers related to somebody in a good position. It was contrary to all my experience of the poor that

they should seal up their secrets, and ask any one to keep them for twelve months. There were the Guises of Bettenham Hall; but they were to all appearances wholesome and open-hearted. Then there was Sir Edwin Langworthy of Calbeck Hurst. He was seldom at home; but I knew nothing about him which was likely to connect him with any secret messages. His weakness was for sport, and he was said to gamble freely; but he would scarcely have any papers which he would privately intrust to me.

Mary must have been perplexed as much as myself, for she came back again as I sat gazing at the packet. I was vexed to be caught as I was; it looked inquisitive. She had some suggestion to make about the mystery which was as improbable as it could be; but when she saw how I was engaged, she laughed at me, and asked who was showing a spirit of curiosity, and who was restless to discover the secret.

I locked the packet up again in the safe, and said. "Well, my dear, for one week at least I will not look at it any more."

CHAPTER II.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

THE packet was a regular subject of conversation between myself and my wife for several weeks; but, as was only natural, it ceased to be a daily topic, and began to be, not forgotten, perhaps, but quietly ignored between us. Other matters came to the front, and claimed all our attention. I may mention that I was forty-five years old that birthday—October first, if you care to know the date—and that the obligations of life seemed to be increasing with me. We had six children; and as they grew older they became more and more expensive. We were not pinched in any way, but we had to exercise constant care over our money, so as not to live above our income. I mention this because we had robbers in the house that winter. If they had succeeded in getting the money which was in the safe, it would have been a

great misfortune to us. Many people would laugh if I were to say what sum we should have lost; but it is wrong to judge of a misfortune by mere figures. What seems a trifle to one man is a fortune to another. I thought it must have been money and nothing else which the robbers sought, for they carried away nothing, and did not even extend their search beyond my study. All my drawers were ransacked, and everything put in dreadful confusion. There were a few scratches on the safe; but the intruders appeared to think that was too tough a piece of work for them, as they made no serious effort to open it. So completely had the marauders confined themselves to the one room, that nobody suspected what had happened, until Jane the housemaid went in to light the fire. Then we were all informed without delay; for she rushed about, declaring that thieves and robbers had stolen everything, and left it all about everywhere. My wife used to say that Jane's English wanted diagrams to make it clear. But there was no waiting for explanation that morning; we all rushed into the study, and saw things in a state of confusion which made my heart sink within me. I was too much amazed to think about the safe, though I had always advocated coolness under all circum-

stances. I still maintain that my opinions upon that subject are right; but I confess I was bewildered when I saw everything upset and thrown about, as if half a dozen madmen had been amusing themselves there. George, my eldest son, is practical, like his mother, and he turned to the safe in a moment; having tried the door, he said it was all right. It did not take me long to prove whether the safe had been opened or not. I unlocked it, and found the cash-box and everything just as I had left them.

Nothing was allowed to be touched until Tomlins the constable came. He was a worthy, respectable man, and expressed his satisfaction when we discovered that nothing had been stolen. Mary thought Tomlins would have been able to explain everything straight off; and I think she was annoyed that he refused to commit himself to any opinion until he had investigated the whole case. Tomlins was from Cumberland, and he was a grand specimen of humanity—tall and broad and strong, with great powers of wrestling. He was just the man to deal with an obstreperous prisoner; but, then, he was not a detective, and indeed he did not pretend to be. Perhaps a sharper man would have seen through the difficulty at a glance, and would have apprehended

somebody straight off,—perhaps one of the maids, or Newkins the sexton, who was also gardener.

The entrance had been effected through the window—that was clear enough. Perhaps I ought to explain that my study was on the ground floor, and though it had shutters to the window, yet they were seldom closed. I often opened the window a little at night, that the room might be thoroughly ventilated for the morrow. I could not be quite certain whether I had done so the night before or not; probably I had; and then, as Tomlins said, it was almost easier to enter the study than to keep outside. A gravel path was under the window, so that it was impossible to distinguish any footmarks there. We went through every room in the house, but could find no signs of the intruders having been in any of them.

"It is very strange to me," I said, "that the men should have confined themselves to this one place. Though they would not be very likely to enrich themselves with what they would find in the dining-room or drawing-room, yet they would have found those hunting-grounds more productive than this."

Tomlins pointed to the safe, and replied: "It looks very much as if somebody knew about that, and came either on the chance of finding it unlocked, or expect-

ing to be able to pick the lock. Perhaps they fancied they would find the key somewhere about; the drawers have been searched through, and no mistake. I have heard tell of a clergyman—he was a rector, too—who always hung his safe-key on a nail over the mantle-piece; it was his only way of being able to find it."

Tomlins wanted to know whether we had seen anybody about who roused our suspicions. This was a difficult question to answer; for scarcely a day passed without somebody calling at the vicarage for alms who might without libel be said to look suspicious. But we had seen nobody, as he termed it, "hanging around, or eying the place overmuch."

"It's nobody in the house," said Tomlins, in a low voice, which I thought had a half-inquiring tone about it. "Nobody in the house would be likely to fling everything out of these drawers as if they expected to find a bag of gold in one of them. Coming into the very room where the money is kept looks as if it was somebody who knew a thing or two about it; and yet, coming where there is a safe, and bringing nothing to do more than scratch it, looks as if it were strangers."

Tomlins went to examine the safe again, and expressed his opinion that it had only been scratched with a knife to make sure whether it was really a safe or not. Being painted and grained like the book-shelves, it looked more like wood than iron.

"Is it a pretty good safe?" I asked.

Tomlins sounded it, and then examined the key. He answered,—

"It's good enough, sir, for ordinary household purposes; but it is not the kind of safe which a jeweller would keep his valuables in if he wanted to sleep soundly; and it would not have much chance of being promoted to a bank if you were to sell it. There are men in London, and Manchester too, who would open it without making very much noise. Might I make so bold as to ask how much there is in it?"

"About fifty pounds," I replied.

"Then, sir, this safe was a good bargain when you bought it; for I suppose it did not cost more than four or five pounds. As sure as we are here, the money would have gone if it had been in any of these drawers. Were they all locked?"

I did not think they were, except those in my writing-table, and they had been opened like the rest.

I could not help looking at Mary, for she had often twitted me about that very safe; but she did not seem to notice what Tomlins said.

Nothing more could be done; but the constable thought we should be wiser to close the shutters of all the lower rooms at night, and fasten them. He said he would come about the house a good deal for some days; for though he did not suspect the domestics, yet it was only right to take every care, and keep an eye on everybody.

In a small place like Bettenham the report of a robbery is soon heard in every house, and it produces almost as much commotion as an earthquake. I have often wondered who it is that first begins to give false colouring to news. I suppose somebody who does not know much about the facts of a case, and who wants to tell a well-rounded tale, is tempted to elaborate the details, until the commentary exceeds the text, and all is passed off for truth. It was rumoured that our house had been stripped of everything except the heaviest articles of furniture; that four men, some said six men, with blackened faces, and armed with loaded pistols, had threatened us all with instant death if we stirred or made any noise. Some even said that I had struggled with the bur-

glars and been severely injured. One advantage of the exaggerated reports was, that when the truth came to be known, it was so tame in comparison with the gossip of the place that it caused a reaction, and made people feel that nothing had taken place which was worthy of conversation. I believe I was blamed in some quarters for making so much fuss about a trifle, though I had no share whatever in spreading the reports.

These events were quite sufficient to drive out of our minds all thought about the packet which had been so strangely brought. I was pleased that I had put it in the safe, for it might possibly be valuable, and if I had left it in one of my drawers it might have been carried away.

I have mentioned George, my eldest son. Perhaps I ought to explain that the reason why he was at home was that sickness had broken out in the school, and the boys had been sent away. Both he and Ellis, my second son, were at Clayton, which had been my own school, and my father's before me. It is a good school, but I remember that sickness broke out in my time more than once, and I had to go home. My father was then rector of Stellingford, and I had to read with him until I returned to school. Perhaps

I thought at the time it would have been pleasanter to have done nothing but play during the enforced holiday; but my father was right, as I can see now. So I told George and Ellis that they must do their work just as if they were at school, and for the time my study would be the schoolroom. I am sure the boys were disappointed, though they were good boys, as I can testify, who ought to know. I was not hard on them, and did not burden them with many lessons; but it added to my labours, and helped to drive away the painful thoughts about the attempted robbery.

Let me acknowledge that I was glad when the boys went back to Clayton. My ordinary duties were quite sufficient to occupy all my time, for I had no curate, and it was only by staying up late at night that I could do what my conscience told me was my duty. One night I was writing a sermon long after everybody had retired. I turned down my lamp very low, and closed my eyes. I suppose I must have dozed, for I was startled by hearing footsteps outside my window. I listened again; there was a sound as of some one trying the window. At first I thought it was the burglars come back again, and then I remembered Tomlins. It was sure to be Tom-

lins, I said to myself. Acting upon the impulse, I turned up the lamp, and went towards the window, intending to swing back the shutters and open it. But the light must have been seen, for I heard footsteps again, but this time they seemed to be of some person moving quickly away. But I opened the window, and said, "Is that you, Tomlins?" There was no reply. Everything was quiet and silent. I was puzzled what to do, so I remained some hours longer in my study, as I had a comfortable couch there. The boys returned to school next day, and I said nothing until they were gone. Then I went to Tomlins, and told him what had happened. Tomlins knew nothing about it, and looked very thoughtful.

"There is something funny about this," he said. "I have been keeping my eyes particularly open since the vicarage was broken into before, and I have seen nobody who looked in the least suspicious. I reported the last affair to the inspector, and he could not understand it any more than I myself. He said it might be the work of a tramp, and yet it looked as if the attempt was made by some one who was not entirely ignorant of the place. He ordered me to give immediate notice if anything more was

done, and he would take further steps in the matter. I shall not be surprised if a detective is sent down."

I suppose the report was sent at once, for during the next day Inspector Wright called upon me, and asked for all the particulars over again.

CHAPTER III.

THE POLICE.

It was fortunate that I could not be suspected of having broken into my own house, or I think Inspector Wright would have made me feel that my character was in jeopardy. Familiarity with crimes and criminals had made him very doubtful about the honesty of people in general. He was respectful, of course; but he could scarcely disguise his contempt for my opinions regarding the servants employed at the vicarage. He had known so many cases, he said, of misplaced confidence, that he had almost come to the conclusion that every crime was committed by the most unlikely persons.

He was a close-shaven man, with a prominent nose and a projecting jaw; a good official, I dare say, but he held what I call very unwholesome views about humanity in general. I quite agreed with

him that it was not pleasant to have burglars prowling about the house, and that something ought to be done to discover the mystery which was perplexing us; but I would not consent to have the servants spoken to as if they were suspected of conspiring to have their master robbed.

I am not aware that anybody has ever given me credit for much insight into character; but that proves nothing. I cannot help remembering how often I have been right in my opinions about people who have thought they were hoodwinking me, and how often my friends who gloried in considering themselves men of the world have fallen easy victims to the simple arts of very transparent impostors. I must put this fact on record, though I do not wish to boast. I knew our servants, and Inspector Wright did not, so I would not permit anything to be said to them which would cause them pain. Of course I had no objection to a detective being sent to the village, and I would render him all the assistance in my power. I even offered to entertain him at the vicarage, but Inspector Wright thought that unadvisable. He said,—

"The people we want to find are generally about the public-houses, and if a guest at the vicarage was

found frequenting such places, it would look strange, and he would be a marked man."

I laughed at this, for I knew how true it was. With my temperance opinions and well-known hostility to the drink traffic, it would be peculiar for one of my guests to be seen much at either the "Cheshire Cheese" or the "Soldier Laddie." These were the only public-houses we had; and if we had been without them it would have been a blessing to Bettenham. The "Soldier Laddie" was a beer-house, and was the resort of all the low characters in the neighbourhood. The "Cheshire Cheese" was an old inn, and enjoyed a better character than the other. Its customers were higher in the social scale; but from my knowledge of the influence exerted by the two houses, I should be puzzled what to answer if I were asked which of the two has done the greater harm to the parish.

I hate deception in every form; and I told Inspector Wright that I hoped the detective would not make this trouble at the vicarage an occasion for falsehood and deceit. I could see in a moment that I had put myself beyond the pale of toleration, and that I was looked upon as little better than an idiot. The world is wonderfully wedded to crooked ways,

though we have had abundance of proof that wrong will never reform wrong. I believe in straightforward courses myself, and at that time I did not think that any disguises or subterfuges would do anything to discover the offender or offenders who had disturbed our peace at the vicarage.

Inspector Wright said that Tobin would be sent, and I might trust the officer to do what was best under the circumstances. I was recommended to say nothing, even to the members of my own household, about the detective. I would not promise absolute compliance in this respect; though, as I said, with some touch of dignity, I believe, "I am not likely to proclaim, even on my own house-top, that steps are being taken to discover the disturbers of my peace."

I heard afterwards that the inspector said some very unflattering things, not only about me, but about gentlemen of my cloth who have to do with real business. The inspector evidently looked upon his own calling as the perfection of practical pursuits, and he placed the discovery of criminals at the front of all professions.

Some of my friends have often spoken to me about the persistence of book-hawkers; but Betten-

ham is a small place, and is out of the way, so that we were not often troubled with men who wanted to persuade us that the best way to buy a book was to take it in expensive divisions. I was more than once enticed, in my curate days, to take in works which seemed as if they would never be completed, and which, when they were finished, were almost out of date. I had resolved to have nothing to do with such schemes again. But a book of local interest which is published by subscription is another thing; and when a man called upon me in reference to a contemplated work on the Roman roads of Cheshire, I was prepared to give him a hearing. Mary always says I have books enough; but then she said that when I had very few indeed.

Antiquarian studies have always had a charm for me. The man who called upon me was very well acquainted with the subject upon which the book was to treat. He knew far more about the Roman remains in the county than I did; and he entered upon a description of the aims of the book for which he was seeking subscribers that delighted me. The work was to be expensive; but I gave in my name at once. I also expressed my willingness to aid him all I could by writing him a note, which he might

show in the neighbourhood. I mentioned several people who I felt sure would take copies; and I found that he was already acquainted with them, and purposed calling upon them. But he thanked me for my offer of a note; and I wrote it. He seemed as willing to chat about old places as I was; and I could not help feeling that a man of more business qualities would have taken his departure as soon as he had gained his object. Seeking subscribers for a book could not be very lucrative employment, and I was half sorry that a man of the tastes and knowledge of my visitor should not have prospered more in the world. His clothes were clean and neat, but certainly they were shabby. He was a man, however, whom it would be safe to invite to one's table; so, as it was almost luncheon time, I asked him to stay and take some with us. To this he readily consented. Not much was said about his book, though I explained to Mary what was the object of his visit. She looked at me in a way which I knew too well to mistake its meaning; but I only smiled.

Soon, however, the stranger and my wife were deep in a subject which was of great interest at the vicarage. A dish of honeycomb was on the table,

and that started the conversation. Bee-culture is Mary's hobby, and has been for many years. There are few villages in England where more hives are to be found than at Bettenham, and that is chiefly the result of her exertions. We have our local Bee-keepers' Association, and I am chairman of it; we have also a number of hives at the vicarage, and I am very fond of honey; but I have never thoroughly mastered the subject, and have always said that Mary must have all the praise for the success which has attended the efforts to make bee-keeping popular in the parish.

The stranger was a bee-keeper, and he knew all about hives and combs and swarms. His enthusiasm upon that topic was greater than it had been about Roman remains. As soon as luncheon was over we went into the kitchen-garden, and he examined the hives and praised them, as I am sure he was bound to do if he knew anything about the subject. There were several things which he suggested as improvements; and he had the servants out that he might explain to them what he meant, for my wife always endeavoured to interest them in her favourite pursuit, and strove to make them acquainted with the latest discoveries in connection with it.

The stranger and I returned to my study, and I explained to him that I was not skilled myself in bee-keeping, but that I did all I could to foster it among my parishioners, some of whom were adding considerably to their income by the sale of honey.

"Would it not pay you," I asked, "to devote yourself to the pursuit, as you seem fond of it? It is very lucrative, I believe, and is capable of endless development."

I thought a word of counsel might do good, for I felt convinced that there was some fault of disposition or habit in the man, or he would not be without any permanent means of making a livelihood. He was a little, wiry man, and habitually held his head forward. This gave him the appearance of stooping, but the stoop was from the neck, and not from the shoulders. He looked about fifty years old, and, judging by appearances, had experienced his full share of ups and downs in life.

He looked at me and laughed, rather a familiar laugh, I thought; and I was just beginning to feel indignant, when he said, "I am Tobin."

At first I could not remember that I had ever heard the name before, and I felt quite bewildered. Then it suddenly dawned upon my mind that the

police inspector had promised to send Tobin to investigate the attempted robbery.

"Are you a detective?" I asked.

My visitor nodded his head and smiled, as if he enjoyed my surprise.

I certainly had been deceived. The thought had never presented itself to me that this man who knew so much about Roman remains, and who had shown such interest in bee-keeping, was anything but what he professed to be. We never like to have a trick played upon us; and I suppose I showed some displeasure in my looks, for my visitor hastened to say,—

"The book is all right, sir. A friend of mine is seeking subscribers for it, and I have promised him that I will canvass this neighbourhood. It is just possible that I shall be tolerably successful too. You see, I must have some reason for going about, or the people whom we want to find will be suspicious. If I had known about these bees, now, I should have had no trouble; but the bees will work in, there is no doubt about that."

"You really do care about bees?" I said.

"Bees, sir, and books together, have been my ruin, in a sense. I might have gone to one of the large

towns, or to London itself, if I would have given myself entirely to my profession; but time for reading I must have, and I cannot live away from a garden and the open country. But still when I work, I work; and I have often found a knowledge of books and rural life useful to me in my business. I dare say it will be so now. I shall go round to the good houses for subscribers, and get a look at the servants; then I shall go among the cottagers, and see if I cannot persuade some of them to try something fresh in the way of hives. In one way and another, including a little prowling about after dark, we ought to find out who has been disturbing your peace."

I had often read about detectives and their stratagems, but this was my first introduction to one in real life.

CHAPTER IV.

TOBIN WATCHING.

I CANNOT tell how annoyed I was that I seemed called upon to countenance anything like deception. I have always advocated the utmost transparency and sincerity in life and behaviour. Some people are constantly raising difficulties about what they call "drawing the line." They want to know where they are to draw the line, and the difficulty of deciding seems to act as an apology for doing wrong. I have often said to them, "It is difficult to draw a line between right and wrong, unless you draw it at the unmistakably right: moral compromise is total surrender." I had said it and felt it; and yet I knew that Tobin was going about the neighbourhood seeking subscriptions for a book, and advocating improved methods of bee-culture, while all the time his real object was to find the men who had endeavoured to rob the vicarage.

Our bees provided a good excuse for him when he wanted to come and report progress. He had permission to bring anybody he liked to inspect our hives, and he made use of the privilege; and it seemed to me that a large part of the villagers came with him at one time or another. What an enthusiast he was, to be sure, and how he would talk about bees and combs and honey! He was staying at the "Cheshire Cheese," and appeared to be neglecting his book; but, as he said, the good families in the neighbourhood were not likely to run away, and it was only among them he was likely to find subscribers.

I began to think the man had forgotten his real purpose in coming to Bettenham, so thoroughly absorbed did he seem in his hobby. But on this point I was unjust to him, for he came to see me one night, about a week after his first appearance, and from his conversation I soon learned that he had really been watching, and listening, and thinking all the time, and that neither books nor bees had made him neglect his legitimate business. Nothing had happened during the week to disturb us at the vicarage; and as Tobin had seen nobody who seemed likely to be guilty of attempting to rob us, I began to hope that after all some stranger had been the guilty person, and that

he had disappeared altogether. This was what I suggested to the detective, and I congratulated him on being able to return to his home again. But my visitor was not in a mood for feeling gratified at this termination of things, and was not ready to adopt my suggestion. He was evidently puzzled with the case, and did not like the idea of giving it up until he had made some discovery. I must confess that I was glad to be rid of the trouble and anxiety; but Tobin seemed to care nothing about this. He wanted to discover the marauders, and unless he could do so he would remain *bitterly* disappointed.

I had to leave home for a few days, as I had promised to lecture in a distant part of the county. Tobin said he should remain until my return, and then if nothing further was discovered he should be compelled to go back, and confess himself beaten. He said he should be careful to let it be known that I was intending to be absent for a while. This I protested against. I did not want my wife to be frightened, and I had been hoping that I should be able to fulfil my distant appointment without anybody except the members of my own household knowing that I was away. Mary is as sensible as any woman I

know; but she did not like me to be away from home at that time.

Tobin expressed his willingness to sleep at the vicarage during my absence. He would like to sleep in the study, on the couch there, if I would permit him. This was a matter upon which I felt that it was necessary to consult my wife; so I asked her to come into the study. She was glad to comply with the detective's plan. I had told her that Tobin was connected with the police, and was endeavouring to discover who had broken into our house. She was not as much surprised as I had been, and she appeared to care very little about the deception which had been practised upon us at first. Tobin was a genuine bee-master; that was the great fact which she recognized.

I saw there were difficulties in the way of carrying out the plan which Tobin proposed, without exciting suspicion on the part of evil-minded people who wished to do us any harm; but, as I have already said, I hoped the miscreants had gone away. The detective said nobody must know that he was there. He would manage that, if we would kindly follow his instructions. He intended to leave Bettenham the next day; but he would appear at the vicarage late each night, and go away again early in the morning. The

servants need not be suspected, he said, so there was no danger to be apprehended from them. They did not know that he was connected with the police; and it was not an unreasonable thing to have a man sleeping in the house during my absence, after our recent disturbances. My wife would not hear of Tobin sleeping on the couch in the study. She said it was an uncomfortable way of passing the night, and did not look hospitable. But he was firm on this point, and we thought it best to let him have his own way. I asked no questions about Tobin's plans, but I felt some degree of satisfaction in knowing that during my absence the house would have a suitable protector.

I need scarcely say that I did not enjoy my journey as much as usual. Whether the lectures suffered from my anxiety or not I cannot say. But day and night I was thinking about home, and wondering how things were progressing there. Yet I felt almost inclined to laugh at myself for my fears. I should have said to anybody else that I knew everything was right, and that was what I said to my own restlessness times innumerable; but still the restlessness remained.

Right glad was I to reach home again, and thankful to find that my fears had been groundless. My

wife was in such spirits, and seemed so free from thoughts of danger, that I was ashamed to tell how often during the few days I had been away I had pictured to myself scenes of trouble and violence in my beloved home. Tobin, she told me, had been each night according to promise, and had disappeared again early each morning; and he had never been disturbed. He might just as well have slept all the time in bed, like a civilized person. He had slept in the spare room after the first night, like a sensible man, as she had all the time known him to be.

I said nothing to Mary, but I thought it very strange that Tobin had changed his plans, and I felt sure that there was a reason for it. I was impatient to see him, but knew that he was not likely to come until after dark. He had a key for the door which leads from my little conservatory into the hall, and that was the way by which he had entered and left the house each night and morning. I did not like this surreptitious kind of work, but refrained from saying anything until I learned from the man himself whether or not anything unpleasant or suspicious had happened during my absence.

I was seated in my study reading, at about nine o'clock, when I heard a light tap at the door. Think-

ing it might be Tobin, I rose and opened it, instead of calling "Come in," as I usually do. Yes, it was he, looking just as he did before I went away. He expressed his pleasure at seeing me back again, and hoped I had enjoyed myself. I thanked him, but said I had been rather anxious about home, and that had somewhat spoiled my pleasure.

When we were both seated, I asked whether he had found the thief yet. He shook his head, and said the case puzzled him more than any task of the kind which he had ever undertaken.

"Something has happened, I suppose, or you would not have changed your mind about sleeping on the couch there?" I said this smiling at the detective's doleful looks.

But he brightened up at once, and replied,—

"Then you did not think it was love of comfort which took me upstairs at night?"

"I knew it was not."

"Well, you are right, sir," said the detective. "The first night I felt sure I heard somebody outside, and I was quite elated with the thought of making a capture; for I did think the prowler would come in. But no. There were a few stealthy footsteps, and nothing more. Then I remembered that the room over

here is the spare room which you kindly asked me to occupy, and I thought I could see more from the window there than through these shutters. So the next night I went to bed, if standing near a window in the dark for four or five hours means going to bed. I saw nothing the first night; but last night, or rather this morning at three o'clock, I saw somebody among the shrubs there. The moon was shining, but the man kept in the shade. He once came into the light, and I caught a glance at his face. I waited, thinking he would break into the house; but he did not, and when I slipped out by the conservatory, and crept round to where he had been, he was gone."

CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

I WAS puzzled beyond everything at what Tobin told me. He could give me no idea who it was that had been watching my house secretly and at an untimely hour. The face was strange to him. He had not been favoured with a prolonged view, but his habit of rapid observation enabled him to see enough to get what he called a memory photograph of the man. I thought his description rather vague; but then, as he said, "You may be able to know a man again, and yet not be able to describe him so that another person would recognize him, unless he happened to possess some very striking peculiarity. The person I saw had not the look of a common thief. There was a wild appearance about him, and it would not surprise me if he turned out to be a madman."

I knew of no madman in the neighbourhood; and I vainly tried to bring to mind anybody who was likely to answer to Tobin's description.

"Well, sir," said Tobin, "it is out of the question to give up this job at present. I do not like to say much in the way of boasting, but if that party with the taste for midnight prowling about other people's gardens and studying architecture in the moonlight will put in an appearance again to-night, I venture to think I shall be able to make his closer acquaintance. This is the side of the house which takes his fancy, and I must make myself as comfortable as possible in the tool-house. It is not the furnished lodgings which one would take of his own free will, but in the course of business I have often occupied some which have been less satisfactory."

I did not like this proposal, but knew that it was useless to protest. The man had his own idea of duty, and was not likely to be diverted from it by anything which I could say.

That was a restless night for me. I might almost as well have been in the tool-house myself, for I was thinking about this strange trouble which had so unaccountably come upon me. Tobin made his appearance in the morning, and had to report a fruitless

night. He seemed to think himself ill used by the stranger, and complained about the obstinacy of fellows who do not come forward when somebody is waiting for them. I could not help smiling at this view of things.

"You must have assistance," I said. "It would be easy to have a watch kept by night without you losing your rest."

"Just what I have been thinking," was the reply. "But I wanted to work this little job alone. It seems such a trifling thing for two of us to be engaged upon. But I will write a note, if you will kindly let Tomlins have it at once; then I will get some sleep. There will be some one here to-night after dark. I will return publicly to Bettenham in the morning, and see what subscribers I can get for the book. That book has been neglected too long. Who knows what I may see when I go a little further away from here!"

All was done as Tobin suggested. A quiet-looking young man, who slept at Tomlins' house during the day, came here after dark and took up his quarters in the tool-house. But he declared that everything was as still as death, and no person had come near the place. Tobin communicated with him in some way;

but I did not see that worthy for a few days, as he was busy visiting the houses for several miles around in search of subscribers for the "Roman Remains." I received a note from him each evening, informing me that the book was doing very well, but the other business was at a standstill. Of course I understood this to mean that he had made no progress in discovering the disturber of my peace.

At the end of three or four days, I was seated in my study one night, when I heard a tap at the door, which I knew to be Tobin's. He still had the key which admitted him by the conservatory. As soon as I opened the door for him, and he stepped into the study, I saw that he had made some discovery. There was a look of satisfaction in his eyes which had not been there before.

"Well," said he, seating himself, "I have heard of a man being blinded with light, but that is an experience which never came in my way before."

He paused; so I asked, "Have you found the man?"

"It seems to me I have found him too much, for I know no more what to do with him than I should know what to do with a sea-serpent."

"Who is he?" I asked impatiently.

"The man I saw in the garden that night is Mr. Naresborough of Naresborough Fold, or I am never to be trusted again."

If he had told me it was John Milton, or William Shakespeare, I should not have been more surprised. Naresborough Fold is more than two miles from Bettenham, and is in another parish. But I knew the place well enough, as I had often passed it. Of the Naresboroughs I knew very little. They were reputed to be a wild lot, and many things were said about them which made their company anything but desirable for respectable people. I was so taken aback by the communication that I had no power to think calmly about things.

"That is impossible," I exclaimed.

"Few things are impossible in this world, sir, except to get honey from wasps."

But then I remembered something which I had known quite well, but which in my hurry I had forgotten: Mr. Naresborough was seriously ill, and had been ill for some weeks. This I told the detective.

He looked surprised at first; then he said, "All I know is, that I asked for Mr. Naresborough, and the gentleman who came to me in the library was the one I saw under the trees that night. He was not

long in sight, but quite long enough for me to have his picture here." Tobin touched his forehead, and looked as if he thought himself infallible. Then he asked, "Has he a twin-brother who looks just like him?"

I answered, "He has no twin-brother. He has a brother—Kemp; but Kemp is younger, and altogether different in appearance."

"Could it be the brother whom I saw?" asked Tobin; "pale and nervous, a man about thirty, though he looks older; a man of medium height, and rather spare-built."

Certainly that description would fit Kemp Naresborough, as far as I could remember, though I had seen him very seldom, and only at a distance. I said so to Tobin, and he nodded his head quickly two or three times, as much as to say, "It may be brother, or it may be cousin, but it is the man I saw in the garden."

"What could Kemp Naresborough want with me?" I asked.

"Just the very thing I was going to ask you," replied the detective. "He was not serenading for nothing."

Habit, I suppose, made me revert to the real mean-

ing of the word serenade, but I did not say anything about its not being applicable to a silent visitor. I was more bewildered by Tobin's discovery than I had been by my previous inability to surmise who my disturber was. Kemp Naresborough was known to be a bad man, but that did not account for any burglarious attempts which had been made upon the vicarage.

My wife came in, and when she saw who my visitor was, she said, "You are talking secrets, I suppose, about criminals, real or imaginary."

Mary did not know everything. I had not thought it well to disturb her peace. But as I was so much puzzled by this latest phase of the question, I deemed it best to tell her exactly how the case stood. I was almost sorry a moment afterwards that I had taken this step, she looked so completely amazed and terrified.

I said, "Do not distress yourself; there is no danger. I would not have told you, but I thought you might be able to throw some light on the perplexing question. What does Kemp Naresborough want with us? As far as I can remember, I never had anything to do with him or any of his family in my life. I have met his brother Humphrey often

enough; but we have nothing in common, and were never intimate."

Mary wanted to know all about the interview which Tobin had had at Naresborough Fold. This the detective was ready enough to narrate. He acknowledged that he had almost betrayed himself, so great was his surprise, but he had managed not to do so. He said,—

"But I was evidently not in business trim, for I failed to get an order. I recovered myself, and went through all my story about the interest and importance of the work; but it was no use. He said he did not feel the slightest interest in the subject, and was surprised that anybody did. He is a nervous man, and very fidgety, and talks a good deal in disjointed sentences. Drinks a good deal, I should think, though he seemed quite sober. I know the kind of man. I have known a number of them. They seem to get drunk inside, somewhere; but the outside is all right, or nearly so. They become great scoundrels, and do not live to old age."

I was interested in this description, for it seemed to be the utterance of thoughts which had often filled my own mind.

"I took good care to show him your note of com-

mendation, and I watched him in a mirror while he read it. He is the man, sir, as sure as we are talking here. I had not really a doubt before, but that strengthened my conviction."

"I can think of nothing to account for this," I said.

"Let us see," said Tobin: "the study was broken into, and the drawers were ransacked, though nothing was taken. It looks as if something was being searched for. The safe was attempted in a poor sort of way, and I felt sure that money was the object. I do not think so now. Is there any register, or anything connected with family affairs, which you keep here?"

"No," I replied. "The registers are kept in the vestry; and I am not aware that any attempt has been made to tamper with them."

We were all silent for a moment or two, and then my wife said suddenly,—

"Can it be that sealed packet, which was left here so mysteriously?"

The moment she began to ask the question, the same thought rushed into my mind, and I felt surprised that I had not thought of it before.

Tobin was in ecstasies. "A sealed packet, left

mysteriously!" he exclaimed. "Why, that is just the thing we want to explain everything. What a pity you did not tell me before."

I told him all the particulars, and opened the safe, and brought forth the packet. He read the note, and examined the packet closely, first on one side and then on the other. He was deeply interested, and said in a low voice, "This must be opened. I believe it will explain all. But if we are mistaken, there will be no harm done; for I can seal this again, so that nobody would know that it had been touched."

I took the packet from him, and, without speaking a word, returned it to its place. Then I said, "Mr. Tobin, that packet has been intrusted to my honour, and will not be opened until the time specified in the note. If it be claimed in the manner appointed, I shall give it up. But whether we solve this problem or not, I will permit nothing which seems to me dishonourable."

I could not possibly describe the look of the detective. Mary kissed me, and sat down again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NARESBOROUGHS OF NARESBOROUGH FOLD.

WHAT a quiet life mine had been previous to that winter. I had done my work, and felt my pleasure and pain, with thankfulness and submission, year after year. It had never suggested itself to me that mystery and crime would mingle themselves in my lot. I knew there were men like Tobin, but I had looked upon them more as characters in a book than as actual living workers in the ordinary world. I knew there were criminals of various kinds, but I had never dreamt that people like the Naresboroughs would league themselves with the enemies of law and order.

In almost every neighbourhood there is a family which is like an ulcer — more or less concealed, perhaps, but still an ulcer, repulsive and dangerous. We had more than one of such in Bettenham. There

were people whom no efforts, either social or religious, seemed to make any better. There was a family called Fox, living in a small and dirty cottage very near the "Soldier Laddie." There is scarcely anything which I had not done for these people; but the soil on which my good seed was sown appeared to have all the disadvantages of wayside, rock, and thorns combined, so that my efforts remained futile.

But among the county families there were ulcers, just as there were among the cottagers. It is not necessary that I should refer to any at present except the Naresboroughs. *They were a sore place* in our district. Strange rumours were sometimes afloat about them; and in spite of anybody's prejudice in favour of social status, I always associated them with the family called Fox, behind the "Soldier Laddie." At the beginning of this century there was a George Naresborough, who was well known as a sportsman and gambler. Some of the books which deal with the fast life of that period have many compliments for George Naresborough, who was the companion of princes and prize-fighters, and who was said to make himself perfectly at home with either. He was killed in a duel; and I have been told that all the circumstances connected with the affair were disreputable.

He had not been married long, for he was quite a young man when he fell, and he left behind him a young widow and one child. This child was also called George. The widow did not live long after her husband. She was passionately devoted to him, and people said she died of a broken heart. The child was brought up by the Gestings; for the mother had been a Gesting. But the Gestings were a terrible lot for drink and all kinds of savage sport. Wenman Gesting is the subject of many rough drinking songs which you may hear in some parts of the country.

When George Naresborough came of age he settled at Naresborough Fold. The quieter of the county families shook their heads at once when they saw what kind of young man he was. Drinking was not condemned then by respectable people as it has been since; but there were forms and degrees of drunkenness which even in those tolerant times were looked upon with reprehension. George Naresborough was soon known, far and wide, as Wildrake, and he was oftener called by this name than by his own. Nobody knew much about the wife whom he brought home. She was a very striking woman, as I have heard, but was peculiar in her ways. From the time when she came to Naresborough Fold the family seemed to

become almost outlawed by people of their own standing in the neighbourhood.

The Naresboroughs were never very long-lived; and Wildrake died, worn out with excesses, when he ought to have been in the prime of his manhood. He left behind him two children, Humphrey and Kemp. People sometimes said, "The Naresboroughs are all boys, and a good thing too."

Perhaps it was a good thing that there were no girls to be trained by Mrs. Naresborough. It was rumoured that she was sometimes mad; but even those who spread the rumours were really of opinion that drunkenness, and not madness, was the real bane from which she suffered. Boys could scarcely have a worse training than that of the two brothers who lived with their mother at Naresborough Fold. Sometimes they had tutors at home, and sometimes they went to school; but no arrangement lasted long, and the brothers grew up less than half educated.

Surprise was often expressed that the family did not come to poverty. But, with all their wildness, they had never been reckless spendthrifts; and some of their property had increased in value very materially.

After Mrs. Naresborough died, the Fold was closed,

and the two brothers went away. Humphrey had reached his majority some time before; Kemp was several years younger. They travelled a good deal, and very little was heard about them in their own neighbourhood. People sometimes said, "Humphrey will come back one of these days, with a mad woman, or a black woman, or some strange kind of woman, for a wife."

In this, however, they were mistaken; for though he did bring a wife, yet she was a sweet, gentle creature, an orphan whom he had met in some of his wanderings. It looked as if the old family was about to renew its respectability, and regain its good name. Humphrey appeared to have given up his wild ways, and Kemp was abroad. Never, during this century, had Naresborough Fold seemed so wholesome as it was for some years after Humphrey and his wife returned to it.

Then Kemp came back from his wanderings, and it soon became known that time had wrought no changes for the better in him. He was a drunkard and a gambler. His presence at the Fold soon made itself felt. Humphrey appeared to fall under his influence, and it was said that the old times were coming back again to Naresborough Fold.

There had been no children born to Humphrey and his wife. But when things were at their worst, and when Humphrey and Kemp were at Chester, during the races, twins were born, a boy and a girl. A special messenger was sent to Chester with the news. Humphrey was found, but it was very late at night, and he was in bed, and too drunk to understand what was said to him. He slept on, and when he awoke another messenger had come with the intelligence that though the children were both living, yet his wife was dead.

In less than a week Humphrey Naresborough looked twenty years older. Dr. Ribstone, who had attended Mrs. Naresborough, and who, in fact, always attended the family at the Fold, said he had never seen anything like it. He spoke to my dear friend the rector of Naresborough, and said,—

"These Naresboroughs are all queer, but I believe there is a healthy streak in them; and if that streak could be allowed to predominate, it would reform the family. This is a critical time. Unless the terrible trouble which has come upon him makes Humphrey a better man, I am afraid it will send him to the dogs altogether."

Perhaps if Kemp had been out of the way Dr.

Ribstone's more favourable alternative might have been realized, but it soon became evident that the gloomier one was likely to be fulfilled. The younger brother was the evil genius of the family, I am sure, and he appeared to close up the avenue which led to a new and better life.

Gay company was not seen at the Fold any more. The two brothers lived there, and it was known that they were drinking heavily. There were sinister rumours about gambling too; and the general opinion was that Kemp Naresborough would manage to become the owner of Naresborough Fold.

The children were sent out to nurse, but not in Naresborough or the neighbourhood. When the rector or the doctor asked about them, Humphrey replied that they were very well, but he could not bear to see them; and he never mentioned the place where they had been sent to.

Thus a few years passed away, and I had ceased to hear about the Naresboroughs, or think about them, indeed, when my trouble began. I had mentioned the affair to Sarpell, rector of Naresborough, and he had shared my opinion, that some vagrant thief had broken into the house. There were circumstances connected with the affair which puzzled him as much

as they had puzzled me; but that, he thought, was the most reasonable conclusion. I remember the Naresboroughs were mentioned; and I learned then that Humphrey was ill, and Kemp was virtually master of the Fold.

Sarpell and I were school-fellows at Clayton, and we were at Cambridge together. The only point upon which we ever seriously disagreed was about drinking. Do not let it be supposed that Sarpell ever drank to excess; I never said so, and never thought so. He held himself up as a model moderate drinker, and sometimes, in his familiar fashion, said I was drunk with teetotalism; yes, that was his expression. Though I knew very little about the Naresboroughs, yet I knew enough to perceive that the fate of the family for generations was a terrible proof of the havoc which drink can make among people who hold a responsible station in life. Sarpell never quite relished this reference to a county family in his own parish, which had so manifestly fallen before the drink fiend. As a rule, he talked as if sobriety was needed among the poor and ignorant only. He believed that the educated and respectable were all right. Yet he ought to have known that they were not. We had other families in our part of the county

who were going to ruin on account of drink. The Letwynns and the Sanderbys were well-known instances. But though Sarpell was the closest and fairest of reasoners on all other questions, yet it always seemed to me that he evaded the real points at issue when we had a conversation about total abstinence.

When I heard what Tobin said about Kemp Naresborough being the man whom he had seen under the trees in my garden, I thought it my best plan to see Sarpell, and tell him all the later particulars which had come to my knowledge. He was quite as much surprised as I had been. He said he believed Kemp Naresborough was mad, and that Humphrey was dying. He could not see daylight through the case any more than I could, but he emphatically negatived any suggestion about the sealed packet having anything to do with the Naresboroughs.

"You were not intimate with the family," he said, "and it is not likely that you would have been chosen to take charge of anything connected with them. They have their lawyers, Slight and Gampitt, a very respectable firm, who, I know, have looked well after their interests; and then I have always been on friendly terms with both brothers, especially with

Humphrey; and though for a long time they have absented themselves from church, yet I am sure if they had wanted to confide anything to somebody besides their lawyers, they would have intrusted it to me."

I could not say a word against this; in fact I repeated that the idea was Tobin's, and not mine. Sarpell said something very uncomplimentary about all the Tobin class. Then he told me many particulars about the Naresborough family, which I have given in this chapter.

I returned home as much bewildered as ever, and found there a note from Tobin, in which he said:—

"You had better go on as usual. The house will be perfectly safe. I will let you know if I make any further discoveries."

It was some time before I saw anything of Tobin again, and things gradually settled down into their old condition, when I heard one day that Humphrey Naresborough was dead.

Part II.

The Mystery Solved.

By Robert Tobin, Bee-keeper, etc.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT TWO GARDENERS.

I CALL my cottage Ancient Lodge. Let the neighbours laugh if they like; what is that to me? The cottage is quite new, I know; but what's in a name? The two things I love most are bees and antiquities. Bees I keep, and bees keep me; but antiquities are likelier to cost money than make it. So I stick to the profitable, and think about the other.

I hoped I had done with the world of vice and crime, for I resigned all connection with the detective force some time ago. But I have been asked to write something about my former duties, as far as I had anything to do with the Naresborough family, and I do not see how I can well refuse.

I have great respect for the Rev. Joseph Fenwick; he is a Christian gentleman, I am sure, but he placed many restrictions upon me when I was at Bettenham,

and made my task difficult. I said to him, "You cannot trap foxes in a bird-cage." This remark of mine, however, had no effect upon him, and he would not permit me to act according to my own judgment.

When I went to Naresborough I had more freedom. I had called, in an assumed capacity, at Naresborough Fold, and seen Kemp Naresborough, as everybody called him, and I recognized him at once as the man who was prowling about the vicarage grounds at Bettenham. My first thought was that he had become insane, and was amusing himself by trying to break into the house of a quiet country parson; but what Mr. Fenwick told me about a sealed packet which had been mysteriously left in his charge caused me to alter my opinion. "Why," I said to myself, "a packet like that might have in it half-a-dozen robberies and a murder or two." I did not say this to the vicar, for I saw that he was anxious about his wife and family. He was sometimes away from home, and could not help being uncomfortable during his absence.

I would have opened the packet without any ceremony, and if it proved to have nothing to do with the matter which was troubling us, I would have sealed it up again, and I am sure nobody would have

been any wiser. But Mr. Fenwick was indignant at the proposal, and Mrs. Fenwick agreed with him.

I had an assistant sent down to Bettenham, and he was left there, while I went away to see what I could discover at Naresborough. I had to be careful, for the two villages are not far apart; and I was pretty well known by the Bettenham people, and did not want anybody to recognize me. Then I had been to Naresborough Fold, seeking subscriptions for that most excellent book, "Roman Remains;" so I thought it best to disguise myself a little, and trust to my knowledge of bees and bee-keeping for all necessary introductions. I had not the same facilities which I had enjoyed at Bettenham. Mrs. Fenwick is an enthusiast with respect to bees and everything connected with honey; so the villagers were educated up to my level, and I had an easy task with them. At Naresborough I found gross ignorance on this subject; if the people had lived beyond the limits of civilization, they could not have been darker and more callous than I found them.

But if you show people that money can be made in a certain way, you will not have much difficulty in bringing them round to your way of thinking. Of course some of my hearers, who thought themselves

cleverer than their neighbours, said I only wanted to sell my hives; but there were wiser heads even at Naresborough, and I was not long before I made a favourable impression upon Alick Jarvis, who was head-gardener at Naresborough Fold. He lived at the lodge, and with the help of a young fellow called Smiddens, did what gardening there was. Jarvis was not satisfied with the grounds at the Fold. If he had been allowed to follow his inclination, he would have had three or four more men at work, and would have made things look very different. I was surprised that he stayed there, for he was a good gardener, and was ambitious too; but I soon learned that his wife was a native of Naresborough, and would not leave it to seek fairer fortunes elsewhere. She was a quiet little woman, and Alick was an overbearing sort of man; but I soon saw that Mrs. Jarvis was far from being afraid of her big strong husband.

Mrs. Jarvis's father and mother lived in a very pleasant cottage not far away, and they had a nice garden of their own. I persuaded Alick to make arrangements with them to have a dozen hives there for a beginning, and I showed him how much he might hope to make in a few years if he had ordinary luck. Let nobody think that I deceived him, or tried

to do so. What I said about bees was perfectly true, as Alick has proved for himself.

While I was attending to this part of my business, I was not neglecting the real object of my visit to Naresborough. I had no difficulty in going about the grounds and gardens at the Fold, and I gathered a good deal of information about the persons who lived there. It was very evident that the family was under a cloud. To put the matter in as few words as possible—the master was pitied, and his brother was hated.

Mr. Humphrey Naresborough never left the house, and I could not get to see him; he was ill, very ill, the people said, and was not expected to get better. He was said to be suffering from the Naresborough gout. As I had never heard of this disease before, I expressed my surprise. Then I was informed that he was drinking himself to death, as many of his family had done before; but it was not pleasant to state the plain fact, so people had invented this other name with which to disguise their meaning.

I saw Mr. Kemp Naresborough sometimes, but he took no notice of me, and if he had done so he would not have known me after the changes I had made. He walked about the grounds sometimes, in a nervous

manner, as if he was afraid of something. It was not long before Alick spoke to me about him, and I found that there was considerable fear that when the elder brother died the younger brother would come into possession of the property.

"Mr. Kemp is scheming for it," said Alick; "and he is not one who is likely to stick at trifles. I have heard Kate, my wife, say that when he was a boy he would rob and destroy all the birds'-nests he could find, lest any other boy should find them. There is one thing about it which we don't forget, even if he does: he is as likely to have the Naresborough gout as his brother; for I think he has drunk as much as anybody his age. But he can stand it better than his brother. Still the pitcher which goes often to the well is broken at last. If pitchers are to be broken, I hope his turn will come before his brother's."

I had to be careful and not ask too many questions; for though Alick was a simple, good-natured fellow, yet he was not without a fair share of shrewdness, and he was honest; and I know that he would have said nothing about his master's family if he had suspected me of having any particular purpose to serve in talking as I did.

Alick received most of his information from

Smiddens, his assistant, who was a well-behaved young fellow, and quite superior to most men in his position. He said he wanted to see a bit of gardening, and then perhaps his father would set him up as a market-gardener, near Liverpool or Manchester, or some other large town. Smiddens was a good deal in the house during Mr. Naresborough's illness, for that gentleman had taken a fancy to him. This made Alick rather busy, and he had to get occasional help from one of the villagers. Smiddens was a teetotaler, and this led to a good deal of fun among his friends. They were fond of telling him that it was like flying in the face of Providence that he should have so many opportunities of drinking, and should not avail himself of them. Smiddens was a quiet young fellow, and had not much to say; but when he spoke it was to the point. He said a good many people had the Naresborough gout besides the Naresborough family, and he had no desire to catch it himself.

I could never quite understand Smiddens. He seemed to me superior to his place, and I wondered that he did not move away and get something better. As I wanted to reach the bottom of everything if possible, I mentioned this to Alick, and found that he partly agreed with me, though he thought that any

young man who intended to be a market-gardener would not be throwing his time away by spending a few years as assistant at a place like the Fold, where the kitchen gardens were extensive, and some of the produce was sold.

"Smiddens knows what he is doing," said Alick's wife, as we were sitting together in the lodge one night. It was supposed that I had spent the day trying to get orders for hives among the farmers round, but I had really been to bed in the cottage where I was lodging about half way between Naresborough and Bettenham. Kate always took Smiddens' part when anything was said about him. Alick, her husband, had his weakness towards the "Pet Lamb," as one of the public-houses was called, and was fond of spending a good deal of time and money there. Kate had four young children to think about, and I suppose she knew that her task would have been easier if her husband had been as sober a man as Smiddens.

She said, "He knows what he is about, and he will come out at last the right way up. He does not forget his home, though he is away from it. Never a week passes but he sends a letter, and never a week passes but he gets one back. A young man who thinks about his home and friends, and who keeps on

the street side of a public-house door, won't need to trouble his head to know which is the better workhouse—the one in his native parish, or the one where he happens to settle."

This made Alick laugh; for in his doleful moments he was fond of congratulating himself that if things came to the worst there would always be the workhouse for him.

I did not find it difficult to get into familiar conversation with Smiddens. He was anxious to learn everything about bees and honey. He had read a book on the subjects; and like a good many books, it had shown him how much may be known about a thing, but it had not shown him how to get the knowledge.

But I soon discovered that it was much easier to get Smiddens to listen while I talked about bees than to get him to talk about the Naresborough family. I could tell that he liked the elder brother, and disliked the younger one; but that I might have guessed.

I wondered whether it would be my best plan to tell Smiddens who I was, and that I wanted to watch Mr. Kemp Naresborough, to see that he did nothing that would injure the elder brother or the two young children who were away from home. These children

had often been talked about in the lodge, and everybody seemed anxious that their interest should not suffer at the hands of their uncle.

As Kate Jarvis said, "The babes in the wood were fortunate in not having Mr. Kemp for an uncle. He would not have put them into anybody's hands to destroy them; he would have done it himself."

Smiddens was present and did not speak.

CHAPTER II.

MARTHA BENT.

SMIDDENS' name was Jacob; I suppose that was the reason why everybody called him by his surname. He was not fond of being called Jacob; but he said the name was in the family, and had been for many generations. In his neighbourhood people were not fond of change, and never thought of giving to any of their children a name which was not common in their own families.

He was an intelligent young fellow, and I had several conversations with him before I decided to take him into my confidence. I called one night at the lodge, and found him taking care of the children. Kate had gone to see her mother, and Alick had walked as far as the "Pet Lamb." This was too good an opportunity to be lost; so after a few remarks about things in general, I asked how the brothers

were getting on at the big house; this was the name I usually gave to the Fold.

"Much the same," replied Smiddens, in a tone which showed plainly that he had no desire to give me any information upon the subject.

He evidently looked upon me as a gossiping old fellow, who had very little business of my own to look after, and who wanted to talk about the affairs of my superiors.

"Look here, Smiddens," I said; "it seems to me you have more interest in the Naresborough family than is generally felt by assistant-gardeners in the welfare of those whom they serve."

I saw in a moment that I had hit the nail on the head. Smiddens blushed and looked embarrassed. But he was not an awkward country lout, so he soon replied,—

"It is strange that the same thought has struck us both. You have some interest about here besides selling hives and persuading people to keep bees. You may be ashamed of your game or not, just as it happens; but I am trying to do my duty to my employer, and that ought to need no explanation."

I could see that the young man was indignant with me, so I thought it best to put myself right at once.

I told him I was there in the interest of Mr. Humphrey Naresborough and his children, as I had reason to think that there was somebody at the Fold who was more than a match for the owner, and whose success would make mischief which might bring the two children to poverty.

"What do you know about the children?" asked Smiddens sharply.

"Nothing," I replied; and then I tried a shot at a venture—"but you do; and I believe we are both working in the same direction, so the best plan would be to work together."

Smiddens was uncertain; that I could see. In a moment I had an impulse to ask him a certain question. During my career I have often had the same kind of impulse, and I have always found it to be the right thing to do at the time. I had not opportunity to look at the pros and the cons, but it seemed to me that I could do no harm, so I asked,—

"Are you acquainted with the vicar of Bettenham?"

It was the right thing to do. I could see that in a moment. Smiddens opened his eyes wide, and was favourably impressed at once.

"Yes, I know him a little. He once stayed at my

father's farm for a month with his family; but that was some years ago."

"Do you know anything about a packet which was left in his care last October?"

This was a chance stroke, there is no doubt about that; but I have had many chance strokes to make in my time. If he knew nothing, I had lost nothing; but if he knew something, he would betray himself. He did know something. I could see it in his face, and felt as sure as if he was speaking to me.

We sat watching each other silently for a few moments, and then Smiddens asked,—

"Does Mr. Fenwick know who sent that packet to him?"

"The packet has not been opened," I replied; "but circumstances of a peculiar kind have aroused his suspicions."

"I don't understand you."

I drew nearer to him and whispered, "Mr. Fenwick's house has been broken into, but nothing was stolen, though everything in the study was upset. That packet was in the safe, and the burglar was not able to open that. Since the house was broken into, it has been visited several times in the middle of the night; but the visitor has been alarmed, and has not

entered it again. Once, however, he was seen. I saw him."

"Who was it?" gasped Smiddens, and he was pale enough now.

"Mr. Kemp Naresborough," I replied.

If ever a man looked bewildered, Smiddens did then. He had that look which a person has who is in a sense incredulous, and yet who knows in spite of his doubts and fears that what he hears is true.

"I never dreamt of this," he muttered.

Just then we could hear Kate's voice as she was approaching the cottage. Somebody was with her, and she was talking about her father and mother in that unconstrained manner which I have often noticed in country places. The children heard her too, and danced about with joy. I whispered to Smiddens, "You had best come out when I do, and we will arrange what is best to be done."

Kate came in, and one of the servants at the Fold —Martha her name was. I had seen her several times when I had been in the grounds, and had spoken to her more than once. She sat down for a few minutes; and Kate, without taking any notice of us, continued what she had been saying about her father and mother. The old man was full of this bee busi-

ness which Alick was taking up. Her father had always been a wonderful man for looking after his home, and doing anything which would put a bit more butter on the children's bread. I could tell that Kate was casting a left-hand sort of reflection on Alick, who was rather fond of the "Pet Lamb" and the company there.

If Martha had not come in, and if Kate had not been full of her talk, I am sure she would have noticed Smiddens. He looked like a man who had been struck. Yes, that is where practice comes in. Now I know quite well that nobody would have any suspicion that I had either said or heard anything more important than usual. So as soon as I could find room to take up the conversation, I entered heartily into a long account of a similar man to Kate's father, whom I had known in my early days. He had taken up with bee-culture, and had become a rich man.

Martha was one of those people who never seem to say anything. She did not look you in the face either. Nods were her stock-in-trade. She nodded when Kate spoke, and she nodded when I spoke. I had noticed her before, as I have said, and had not been very favourably impressed with her. But Smid-

dens took up one of the children and quieted it, as the child was becoming fractious. I was glad to see Smiddens do this, for I did not want Martha to notice him. I had the suspicion that she would be able to read him, and might guess that he had heard something of a startling character.

Kate began to get the children ready for bed, and Martha took her departure. Then I arose to go also, and Smiddens said he would walk with me part of the way.

We said nothing until we had reached a footpath which crossed a field; then my companion was commencing to say something about the subject of our former conversation, but I told him to wait until we reached the middle of the field.

"It is a small matter," I said; "but in a business like this we must attend to small matters."

The middle of the field was slightly elevated, and from it could be seen all the rest of the field and, in fact, a good deal of the surrounding country, for though it was night it was far from being dark.

"Now," I said, "first of all, while I think of it, what about that woman Martha?"

"Martha Bent?"

"Yes, if that is her name. Is she bent like her

name? I am not very favourably impressed with her."

"She is all right, as far as I know," said Smiddens. "But then I had no idea that anybody was wrong at the Fold, except as far as drinking and card-playing are concerned. You have taken my breath away about Mr. Kemp. I knew he was winning master's money fast, but I never expected him to be guilty of robbery."

"What is Martha Bent?" I asked.

"Cook," said Smiddens. "She has not been cook long; she helped in the kitchen until Sarah Witton was married, and then she took the place, and seems qualified for it."

"She is rather quiet," I answered, "and never seems to notice anybody. Women of that sort are either the best of their sex, or they are not far removed from being the worst. I hope she did not see how you were knocked into a heap by what I told you in the lodge. It is as well to be on the safe side, and I am not anxious for Mr. Kemp Naresborough to think I am looking after him. When the right time comes I will tell him, but premature disclosure would simply put him on his guard, and enable him to accomplish his purpose, whatever it may be."

"I have been in the house a good deal lately," said Smiddens, "and I must confess that I think if a question arose about which of two masters Martha Bent should serve, it would be Mr. Kemp, and not his brother."

"Indeed! how is that?"

But Smiddens was not prepared to say any more. That was his opinion, but he might be mistaken. He would go no further in that direction at present.

"You know about the sealed packet?" I said, passing away from one subject to another.

"Yes," replied Smiddens. "It was I who took it to Mr. Fenwick's house."

This was a surprise, for I had fancied that Mr. Naresborough had taken it himself.

"Do you know what it contains?" was my next question.

"I do not," was the reply; "but I believe it contains either money or money's worth, and there is a good deal of writing in it also. I cannot think how Mr. Kemp has discovered anything about it. I have been in the house a good deal lately, for sometimes Mr. Naresborough is so ill that he cannot move himself. There was nobody in the room when he gave me that packet and told me where to take it; and of

course I have never mentioned it to anybody till now. I scarcely think he would tell. He was very anxious about it, and said that his children's bread, and even more than that, might depend upon my faithfulness."

"Do you think you were followed?" I asked.

"I think not," he said. "Who could follow me? Who could know anything about it?"

At the place where we were standing there was a thick bush, which was a good landmark in winter time when the ground was covered with snow. We were behind it, and saw some one crossing the field by the way we had come. It was a woman; and when she reached the crown of the hill she stood and looked in the direction of the cottage where I lodged. She stood some minutes, and then retraced her steps.

I turned to Smiddens.

He whispered, "Martha Bent."

CHAPTER III.

SMIDDENS EXPLAINS.

THAT bush, which was called Thorntop, had hidden us, so that Martha Bent did not notice how near we were to her. I suppose it was habit which made me prefer the shelter which was at hand; the thought of being watched or followed had never entered my mind. Still I was not much surprised. Martha Bent had not impressed me favourably from the first; and what Smiddens had told me made it seem probable that he had been followed when he took the sealed packet to Bettenham vicarage. My first suspicion had turned to Mr. Kemp Naresborough; but now I saw how the thing could be done without the person who was most interested in the success of it himself acting the spy. Not that the gentleman would have had any scruples, but he was well known about Bettenham, and Martha Bent was almost a stranger. She

would, therefore, be less likely to create attention than he.

"Well, Smiddens," I said, "you had better not go back that way. There may be somebody watching, and though I do not think it matters much, yet it is always well to keep your opponents as uncertain as possible."

So we crossed the field, which brought us into a lane by which Smiddens could reach Horton Farm, and then it was easy enough to reach Naresborough by the Old Bridle Way.

But we had a long conversation together before we parted, and at the close of it we understood each other thoroughly. I found that the young fellow was really devoted to Mr. Humphrey Naresborough's interests, and that was the chief reason of his holding the position of assistant-gardener under Alick.

He said, "It is not all pretence. My father is a thorough believer in spade husbandry and in market gardening. My elder brother Stephen will be sure to have our farm after my father, so that I shall need to move away somewhere else. My father has always impressed upon us that fifty acres near a town, and cultivated in the right manner, would be as good as two or three hundred acres further away. In fact,

my father believes in small farms, and he holds many opinions about the subject which are far from popular among his neighbours. But he is a good man, and the country would be far better if there were more people like him. My time at Naresborough Fold has not been wasted; still I should not have remained there if I had not had another reason besides Alick's gardening knowledge. The fact is, that Mr. Naresborough's two children are at my father's house, and have been there ever since they were taken away from here. I told you that Mr. Fenwick and his family once stayed there a month in summer. The reason was that, as our house is a very large one, my father advertised part of it one year when things were rather bad, and the plan succeeded so well that he did it again and again, even when there was not the same urgent need. My father is a strict teetotaler, and we all are like him in that respect; I hope we shall be like him in other things too. If I say so much about my father, you must not think that I have less reason to praise my mother. You ought to know them both."

"I hope to have that pleasure," I replied heartily, for I could not help admiring a young man who had such enthusiasm for his parents.

Then Smiddens proceeded—"My father always advertised for total abstainers when he wanted to let the spare rooms at the farm. We do not keep drink in the house; and that was the best plan, as it prevented disagreements. Some people, of course, would not come on any account with such restrictions, but others preferred such a place, and we never had any difficulty in obtaining visitors for three or four months in the year. One day Mr. Naresborough answered the advertisement. It was the morning after it had appeared in the paper. He took the rooms for a month. Something was said to my father and mother, but what it was we did not know. I have learned since. Mr. Naresborough was trying to break himself off drink. I believe he made a good fight of it for a few days; but there were public-houses within a short distance in any direction he cared to walk or ride, so his resolution was not kept. He took my father into his confidence a good deal, and mentioned his two motherless children, and expressed a desire that they should come to the farm and stay there with their nurses for some years. An arrangement was made, and the children came. The old nurses were not kept, but my mother found a likely woman, who has taken charge of them. The little ones are strong and happy,

and can run about and play. Mr. Naresborough stipulated that they should never know the taste of intoxicating drink, and while they remain at the farm I am sure his wishes will be attended to. His brother does not know where the children are. Mr. Naresborough is subject to fancies, and among them is one that if his brother can make these children into drunkards he will do so. I dare say Mr. Kemp would not be sorry if the children were dead, for he is an avaricious man, and would like to possess every penny belonging to the family; but I can scarcely think that he is so diabolical as to wish the family curse should go on for ever."

"Difficult to say," I interrupted; "bad people are not quite sane, and are capable of doing what seems most unlikely. But proceed."

"I have not much more to tell," replied Smiddens. "Mr. Naresborough wished me to come here, that he might hear about the children regularly. He does not write himself, or receive any letters from the farm, but I tell him every week how the children are. My sister Mary has charge of them now, and she is as fond of them as if they were her own."

"What do you think the sealed packet contains?" I asked.

"It is difficult to say," replied Smiddens. "Though Mr. Naresborough is very confidential with me about the children, and about my home and friends, yet he never says much to me about his private affairs. It is not likely that he should. I have sometimes thought it might be his will; but it would be strange if he did not leave it with his lawyers, unless he suspects them. He has seemed suspicious of almost everybody lately. It is a pity he does not suspect his brother more. Mr. Kemp encourages him to drink, and they are nearly always playing at cards, and I doubt whether master often wins."

"Do you think there is money in the packet?" I asked.

"Money, or money's worth, I sometimes think," was the reply I received.

"What do you mean by money's worth?"

"Perhaps a bond of some kind. When master gave me the packet he told me I was the only person in the house who was to know anything about it, and he was very anxious that I should be careful and not lose it. He said it might be all his children would have to keep them from poverty. Then he said it was not money—it would be no use to me. I was angry that he should seem to mistrust me; but I

remembered how strange he was at times, and I took no notice. I should not be a bit surprised if it is a bond, for I have heard Mr. Kemp say something about a bond, and then the brothers have quarrelled. Mr. Kemp is like a leech, and he will not be satisfied until he has won everything from his brother."

"Do you know the word which is to be used if the packet is fetched from Mr. Fenwick's?" I asked.

"No, I do not," said Smiddens. "Mr. Naresborough has never said anything to me about fetching it back. I have not been as much with him just lately as I was formerly. When he was stronger he often stood near me in the garden, and talked to me about the children. But now, when he sends for me, as he does sometimes, to read the newspaper to him, Mr. Kemp is generally about, or Martha Bent comes in to persuade him to eat something which she has prepared for him. Mr. Naresborough has no suspicion that Martha is a spy, I am sure; but I am ready to think she is."

"It looks like it," I replied. "I cannot understand how she has come to think I am worthy of being watched. Yet it looks as if she had some reason for coming as far as Thorntop to-night, and I do not suppose it was for the sake of the fresh air or the

scenery. But how was it you were uneasy about me?"

"I do not know that I was uneasy," replied Smiddens; "but knowing what I did, I was prepared to scent danger in any direction. If I had been asked to give my opinion, perhaps I should have said you were in the interest of Mr. Kemp Naresborough. I know he is capable of almost anything, and he is not exactly satisfied with me. I thought he had perhaps set you to work to find out what you could about me."

It was late now, and I thought Smiddens ought to return to his lodgings; and I arranged to meet him the following night at the cottage where I was staying. I recommended him not to come the direct way, but round by Horton Farm, as he was less likely to be seen by any one who might be on the watch.

I wanted time to think matters over. It seemed to me that something ought to be done; but whether it would be best to let Mr. Humphrey Naresborough know about his brother's proceedings, or tell Mr. Kemp that he was discovered, I could not decide. I should have liked to have taken him up on a charge of housebreaking; but I had no satisfactory proof that he was

the person who had broken into the vicarage. There was no doubt in my own mind, but I know the difference between suspicion and proof. So I returned to my lodgings pondering the question over, and decided to sleep upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE PERPLEXITIES.

THE cottage where I was lodging was on the direct way from Naresborough to Bettenham, if you took the field-paths. The highway was further round. I was attracted to the place when I first saw it by the hives in the garden, and the creeping plants which almost covered the cottage walls. I cannot resist the sight of bees or their homes, and honeysuckle about a dwelling always makes me feel friendly towards the people who live there. I found that Tommy and Betty Token were simple and generous people; and when I proposed to stay with them a few weeks, that I might push my trade in bee-keepers' appliances, they were quite willing, and charged me a very moderate sum for the accommodation they gave. I had not said much to them about the Naresboroughs, as they seemed to know very little except

second-hand rumours about the gentry in the neighbourhood.

I scarcely ever knew a smaller couple than these. They were not dwarfish, and certainly they were not deformed, but they were small and compact in their stature and build. Both were rosy-cheeked and healthy-looking, and both were quaintly dressed in the fashion of some bygone time. Betty was as enthusiastic about her poultry as Tommy was about his bees. There was nothing doubtful about the fresh eggs at Lane Bent, as the cottage was called. There was a bend in the lane just there, and I suppose the name came from that. I said as much one day; but neither Tommy nor his wife had thought about the matter, or cared to think about it. Tommy said knowing what names meant would neither raise the rent nor lower it. With my taste for antiquities this seemed to me a sordid view of life, so I did not talk much with Tommy except about bees; and I am sorry to say that I could not prevail on him to accept any of the new views on this subject.

My good friends retired to rest early; but they were simple and unsuspicious, and if I was out late they put the key where I could reach it through a window at the back.

"We were thinking of going to bed," said Tommy, as I entered the cottage. "It is time. 'Early to bed and early to rise—,' you know."

One of Tommy's peculiarities was shown in a fondness for quoting pieces which he never finished. I do not think he could have completed the shortest and simplest proverb in the world. When he told me that he had lived in that cottage for thirty years, he said, "'A rolling stone—,' you know." But this was not inconvenient, for Tommy never quoted anything but trite and well-known phrases.

"Are you not afraid of putting the key in the window?" I asked. "You have to leave the window unfastened, and thieves might get through it and rob you."

"No fear," replied Tommy. "I have lived here for thirty years, and never had the value of a farthing stolen. Oh dear, no. 'An honest man's the noblest—,' you know."

It was difficult to see the logical connection; but then you did not expect Tommy to be logical, at least I did not after what I had heard him say on the subject of hives.

"Yes, this is an honest neighbourhood," I replied, "if what you say is true; and I am sure it is, or you

would not say it. If people were evil-minded they could rob a lonely cottage like this. Scarcely anybody passes from set of sun to break of day."

That was rather a fine style of saying it; but Tommy admired what he called setting one's talk off with a flower in its button-hole.

"There are passers, and I have seen them late and early," said Tommy; "some neighbours, and some strangers. All sorts and conditions, you know. Why, I have seen Mr. Kemp Naresborough going this way towards home after I have got up in the morning. That would not suit me—turning night into day. 'One man's food is another—,' you know."

I was a little startled at what Tommy told me, and as I was thinking about the very man he mentioned, it seemed a strange coincidence. But with my experience, I was not weak enough to betray myself. Betty went to bed, and Tommy and I sat down for a quiet chat. In spite of his theories about early to bed and early to rise, I think Tommy would have sat up all night to chat, if the subject suited him. I decided to try him about the Naresboroughs.

"Mr. Kemp Naresborough seems to be fond of rambling about the country at unearthly hours," I said. "I have known other people besides you who

have seen him when he ought to have been in bed. What is his object, do you think? Is he looking after his keepers, do you suppose?"

"There is not much need to watch keepers about here," replied Tommy; "nobody would think of poaching. I live on Naresborough land myself, and my father did before me, so I am not likely to say more than is true; but I do think that when Mr. Kemp is quite right he is a bit different from usual. 'Mad as a March—,' you know. I have seen him hurrying away past here, both coming from home and going back again; and in the morning he has looked tired and worn out, as if he had been rambling about all the night. 'Here and there and—,' you know."

"Has he been accustomed to the habit long?" I asked in a careless tone.

"No; it was only some months since that I first noticed him. Of course he may have done it before, and I not have seen him. But he is different from what he was, I am sure. There is a crack in the Naresboroughs somewhere, and they show it sooner or later. 'What's in the bone—,' you know."

"Mr. Humphrey Naresborough seems very ill, so I hear."

"Yes; the new cook has told us it is a wonder if

he gets better. She calls here sometimes. She says she needs a walk, and it is not pleasant to go nowhere for nothing; so when she starts out she makes up her mind to come as far as here, and then she goes back again. She seems quite a superior sort of person —an orphan, she told Betty. Comes from the south country. They are nice spoken down there. Though, as I say, 'Nice words—,' you know."

I nodded, for I knew quite well that he meant to tell me that nice words would not butter parsnips. I said,—

"I saw her to-night when I called at the lodge to see if Alick Jarvis was at home. I did not know she was a friend of yours. It is strange I never saw her here." This I said in as careless a tone as I could assume. But I was surprised to think I had been watched, and that was what it looked like.

"Well," said Tommy, "she is a timid kind of girl, and if anybody called while she was here she would run into our bedroom there. She says that she once lived at a place, and the cook was in the habit of stealing things and taking them to a cottage which she visited, and Martha would not like to be suspected. But there is no risk of that. We are well known, and have earned a character, I hope. But we

oblige her; she seems to like it, and it does us no harm. You were talking about names the other day. Martha first came this way because she heard the cottage called Lane Bent, and her name is Bent. I told her you were great at names, and she was quite interested in you. She says she always had a fancy for that sort of thing. 'Birds of a feather—,' you know."

Tommy laughed at his own joke, and of course I kept him in countenance. Then I brought the conversation back to the Naresboroughs; but my companion could not afford me much information. He said Martha did not talk about the family. She had not been with them very long, and being only cook, saw very little of the brothers.

Tommy and I bade each other good-night, and retired to rest. But I cannot say that I rested much. I was thoroughly annoyed to think that I had been suspected and watched, for I had no doubt such was the case. I said to myself, "Robert Tobin, it is time you gave up this kind of business, and gave your undivided attention to bees. You know something about them, and can manage them; but men and women seem beyond your powers."

That was what I said and what I felt. But still

the business had to be gone through; so I resolved that I would see Smiddens again, and then would take decided steps. Either I must see Mr. Humphrey Naresborough and warn him, or I must see Mr. Kemp and threaten him, or I must see the family lawyers and put them on their guard that unless they were careful the interests of their client would suffer at the hands of his brother.

It was late when I went to sleep, and if I dreamed, as I suppose I did, Martha Bent was a prominent figure in my night visions.

CHAPTER V.

WAITING FOR THE END.

I HAD a restless day, and was quite impatient for night to come, that I might finally decide upon my plans when I had consulted with Smiddens. But, to my surprise, Smiddens did not put in an appearance. I had gone over the subject thoroughly in my mind, and I thought I had anticipated everything he could tell me, so that I might see beforehand how it would affect my plans; but I had made no provision for a result like this.

I waited as long as I thought desirable; for Smiddens, not being his own master, might be delayed. Then I walked along the way we had agreed upon. It was rather roundabout, but, as I have explained, it was not likely to be watched. I went the whole way, and met nobody. It was rather late when I reached Naresborough village, and all was quiet except

at the public-houses. The "Pet Lamb" seemed very full. I saw nobody in the street whom I knew, so I called at the place where Smiddens lodged. He had always had lodgings in the village, though he had stopped a good deal at the Fold. The people at the cottage said he had not been at home since morning, and they did not expect to see him again until all was over.

"All what over?" I exclaimed.

"Don't you know?" asked the woman, shaking her head dolefully. "Mr. Naresborough, Mr. Humphrey of course, is taken worse, and they do say he has no chance of getting better. He took no end of a fancy to Smiddens; and a quiet, respectable young man he is too, and, I must say, partial to his master, though that's, of course, when your master's partial to you, as I have said times many to his face."

This was Mrs. Bagshaw, with whom Smiddens lodged; and I have no objection to say now that though she was a clean woman and honest, yet I would live in an empty house and look after myself sooner than lodge with her or anybody else with a tongue of the same capacity for rambling speech.

"Smiddens must be busy at the Fold," I said. "He promised to meet me; but if he could not, he could not."

Mrs. Bagshaw evidently thought this was some kind of reflection upon her lodger, for she was in arms on his behalf immediately.

"It is not Smiddens," she said severely, "who says one thing and does another, either in the morning before work, or at night when it is done. If duty is to be neglected, what is the result, and who can you look to for help when you lose your place, and perhaps no more work to be had? Or if there is, it means another parish, or out of the county, for anything I can tell. Then good-bye to your lodger, though you are a poor widow, and perhaps the workhouse staring you in the face."

She had a grievance against me I could see, though my remarks had been quite harmless. I could not help thinking how easy it would be to show her that her remarks were foolish and uncalled-for, when she said,—

"Why, here is Smiddens himself, and looking that tired he ought to go to bed the moment he comes in, unless he would like some supper. But it is a shame if he has come from the Fold at this time, and is hungry into the bargain."

Smiddens was coming along; so, without bidding Mrs. Bagshaw adieu, I went to meet him.

"Anything wrong at the Fold?" I asked in a low voice; for Mrs. Bagshaw was still at the door, and I knew she was likely to remain there as long as we were in sight.

"Things are as bad as they can be," said Smiddens sorrowfully. "Mr. Naresborough is delirious now, and they have given me the broad hint that my room will be preferable to my company in future. While he was conscious he would have me in the room, though two doctors were there and Martha Bent, who is nurse now. Another cook has come to-day, and the nurse who was there before has been sent off."

We walked away, and as we were not in much danger of being watched, we turned towards the field-path. Smiddens said Mr. Naresborough had changed for the worse last night, and had been sinking all day, but had kept his senses until about eight o'clock, and then had become delirious.

"Have you been with him all day?" I asked.

"Very nearly," replied Smiddens. "He was asking for me last night, but they would not send for me. Mr. Kemp came to me this morning in the garden, and told me rather harshly that I had better go into the house, for my master had a crazed fancy to see me. I went in, and met the nurse coming out.

When I reached Mr. Naresborough's room, I found Martha Bent there. He was very ill, and very wild-looking, and ordered Martha to leave the room. She would not at first, and Mr. Kemp came in; but he was ordered out too. As they delayed, Mr. Naresborough glared at them, and with a shriek of rage was getting out of bed, though he did not look as if he was able to do so. Then they left the room. Mr. Naresborough said, 'Lock the door;' but there was no key, and I could not. Then he motioned for me to draw near to him; and he whispered with terrible eagerness, 'If I die, go to Mr. Fenwick, and tell him to open the packet. Say "Excelsior," and he will know that you are authorized to go from me. If I do not die, you will say nothing. Do you swear?' I assured him that he might trust me. He was about to say something else, when the door opened, and Martha Bent came in and said the doctors were there. It has been a sad day. The doctors can do nothing for him, and he is wanting brandy every time he is able to make his wishes known. The doctors allow him some, but not nearly as much as he asks for. Martha Bent is a good deal more accommodating, and so is Mr. Kemp. I got into trouble through interfering. I said they might as

well give him poison. I shall never be forgiven, I know."

"He may be dead now," I remarked.

But Smiddens said the church bell would be tolled, so that we should know.

"Has the rector been to see him?" I asked.

"Yes," was the reply; "he came this afternoon; but Mr. Naresborough was so bad that he did not see him."

Smiddens and I walked on in silence awhile, and then I told him what I had heard the previous night about Martha Bent. He seemed surprised at first, but he soon said,—

"Martha Bent is certainly a mystery. She is Mr. Kemp's tool, I am afraid. She does everything he tells her. I am astonished that she came to the Fold as a helper in the kitchen; but I suppose they thought she would in that manner escape suspicion. She has been a spy, I dare say; but I think she has not discovered much. I am sure Mr. Kemp would like to know where the children are. Perhaps he thinks I know something about them, for he has seen his brother talking to me in the garden when he was able to go out of doors, and in the house since he was taken worse. My letters have always come to me at

my lodgings, and I have always burned them after reading them. I do not care to trust anybody, though I believe Mrs. Bagshaw is perfectly honest."

"Well, we can do nothing to-night," I said. "You had better go to the Fold in the morning, and I will walk as far as Alick Jarvis's, where I shall be sure to hear the news. If you think that anything wrong is being done, come to me. I shall be either in the lodge or within sight of the gate. A word or two from me would soon bring Mr. Kemp to his senses, and I could soon put Martha Bent into a tremble too."

"Why, do you know anything about her more than you have said?" he asked quickly, as though he suspected that I had kept something from him.

"Nothing whatever," I replied; "but it is plain enough that she is not quite what she seems to be; and when that is the case, a very indefinite charge is all that is needed to throw a person into a state of terror. Good-night."

We shook hands; but just as we were parting, the bell of Naresborough church commenced to toll for the dead.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

I KNEW what that passing-bell meant. Mr. Humphrey Naresborough had gone to his account. But I thought it best that Smiddens should go to the Fold and make sure, and then he should come and tell me. While he hurried away, I thought over my plans. Should we go to Bettenham that night, or wait till morning? It was very late, and in all probability the good vicar and his family would be gone to bed. Smiddens was back immediately; he had seen Alick Jarvis, who had told him that the bell was for his master.

"All Naresborough seems in the street," said Smiddens. "I never saw the little place so excited. The general opinion seems to be that Mr. Kemp will now be master at the Fold. The two children are forgotten, or supposed to be dead."

We walked on as far as Lane Bent, and I saw that the cottage was in darkness.

"Tommy and Betty are in bed," I said; "and I do not know whether to go to bed myself, or walk as far as Bettenham. Mr. Fenwick sits up very late sometimes, and I might possibly find him in his study."

Smiddens turned the wavering balance. He said he did not feel in a humour for sleep, and would go with me.

It was after midnight when we reached Bettenham church, and I could see that the vicarage was in darkness, as in fact was the whole village. I had given strict orders for a watch to be kept, and I was curious to know whether this was being attended to. Well, my own opinion is that I could have broken into the house half-a-dozen times over, without anybody being the wiser. The young man appointed to the task was nowhere to be found. I went to his lodgings, and after considerable trouble managed to awake him, without arousing anybody else. He said he was not well, and intended to go on duty at one o'clock, as he thought there was no danger earlier. He declared that he had never been away from his post before. The first time people are discovered is always the first time they have done wrong. Patten was the

young man's name, and he was lodging with old Gregory, who was formerly in the force; so we were not afraid of going in and sitting by the fire, for a fire was still burning. Patten told Gregory who the visitors were, and we were not disturbed by any members of the family. The night was rather cold, and we sat by the fire longer than we ought to have done, for we were keeping Patten from his duty. We walked together as far as the vicarage, but said nothing, for we did not want to alarm anybody. Mr. Fenwick, I knew, was nervous, and if he had heard voices he would have thought his house was being broken into. We stood at the door leading from the churchyard to the vicarage grounds, and I was whispering a few directions, when I felt sure I could see somebody in the garden near the study window. I drew the attention of my companions, and whispered, "When the cat's away, the mice are at play."

I sent Patten round to the front gate, and left Smiddens near the spot where we were standing, while I crept into the shrubbery. I had taken Patten's lantern from him, and made ready to spring forward, and throw a light into the face of the person whom I could see. Patten must have tried to open the gate, for it creaked. This hurried me, for I also

heard a low whistle. At once I rushed forward, and threw a light on the man who stood there. It was Kemp Naresborough, before the open study window.

"So, Mr. Kemp Naresborough, I have caught you at last," I said.

Before I could grasp him, my foot caught against something, and down I went. I was up again directly, and saw him running towards the churchyard.

"Stop him, Smiddens!" I cried; and was about to follow, when I heard a noise at the study window. It struck me in a moment that Mr. Kemp had only been watching, and that somebody else was at work inside. I had my truncheon; and raising it, I approached the window, when a woman's voice exclaimed,—

"Don't strike, or you'll kill me!"

Patten was now with me, and he picked up the lantern. When he turned it to the window, whom should I see there but Martha Bent, pale as death, and trembling.

"How many of you are there?" I asked savagely. "I will shoot the first that stirs." Though the truth is, I had nothing to shoot with.

"There's nobody inside," said Martha.

I soon satisfied myself on this point, and then ran to see whether Smiddens had captured the runaway. To my disappointment I found that he had not. He was seated on a grave-stone nursing his right leg. His tale was soon told. Mr. Kemp had leaped the low wall, and then had run across the churchyard. Smiddens had followed him, and overtaken him, when the fugitive turned round and gave him a severe kick, and then made off again.

"Never mind," I said; "we shall easily find him. Let us go back to the house."

Lights were flitting about now, and Mr. Fenwick appeared in his dressing-gown. He could scarcely believe his eyes. Patten took Martha Bent to the constabulary, and Smiddens and myself entered the house. As soon as I entered the study I saw the whole case at a glance. There was a proper set of tools there, and the safe had almost been opened.

"We were only just in time," I exclaimed. "Martha Bent is a regular practitioner—in a short time she would have emptied that safe. It is good enough for amateurs; but Martha Bent has learned her trade properly. I have heard there are women as well as men who, as the saying is, can go anywhere, and do

anything, but this is the first time I have come in contact with one."

The house was thoroughly aroused, and it took some time to get it settled again. Then we sat down, and I told Mr. Fenwick all that had happened since I saw him last, and about the sealed packet, and the message which Mr. Humphrey Naresborough had left with Smiddens.

Mr. Fenwick seemed unwilling to open the packet even then; but Mrs. Fenwick was there too, and she was all in favour of opening it, and trying to fathom the mystery.

The packet was opened. It contained a letter addressed to Mr. Fenwick, and a paper containing a good deal of writing. There was also a corporation bond for five thousand pounds, and a will.

I was prepared for the money and for the will; but the letter and lengthy paper astonished me. Mr. Humphrey Naresborough had written a full account of his family history and his own career, in which he showed that drink had been the curse which smote down every one of them. He said he had no longer the power to resist the evil himself, but he wanted his children to be brought up without ever knowing the taste of it. The will had been properly drawn

up by a firm of solicitors in Chester. He had not gone to his own lawyers, for he had been afraid lest his brother should know about it. Mr. Fenwick and Smiddens' father were appointed executors, and the guardians of his children. They were urged never to let the children taste strong drink, and to give them their father's confession to read when they were old enough to understand it.

It was possible to see how completely Mr. Humphrey Naresborough had fallen under the influence of his younger brother. That corporation bond had been sent to Mr. Fenwick that it might not fall into the avaricious grasp of one who seemed resolved to possess himself of all the Naresborough property. The letter to Mr. Fenwick said :—

" I have lost a great deal of money to my brother, and I am beginning to fear lest I should leave my two innocent children destitute. O sir, it is an awful thing to walk into unmistakable ruin with your eyes open. That is what I am doing. I know what is my curse, and I know what would save me. But I feel like a doomed man. Then sometimes the gambling mania is upon me, and I have lost large sums to my brother. This bond I have set aside for my children, and nothing shall tempt me to touch it.

If everything else goes, that will remain, and it will keep the dear ones from poverty. I asked Mr. Smiddens whether he knew of a clergyman who was as firm an abstainer as himself. He mentioned you. I did not consult you about the step I was taking, because I was afraid you would refuse. I intend to try and do without drink. If I succeed, I shall know in less than a year that I am master of myself; then I will send for this packet back again, and you will know nothing about it. But I write full particulars lest anything should happen. I may die, for I am not well. Remember me with pity if I die. I know that I ought to have made a better fight for victory over myself than I have done. I did not think about it until temptation had become very powerful over me. But my children must be saved. Do not fear to show them the other paper I have written. I would rather they should despise and hate my memory than fall into my errors. I will not say anything against my brother Kemp. But remember that he has no authority over the children. I scarcely know what claims he has against my estate. From what he says, I have lost more money to him than I can recollect anything about. I feel that my affairs are in a painful condition. Oh, if I could live over again!"

These are some of the passages which Mr. Fenwick read as we sat together that night in his study. I could see that he and the good lady his wife were bewildered; but I knew they would accept their responsibilities.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIAL AND THE SENTENCE.

My share in that unfortunate business of the Naresboroughs soon came to an end, and I was glad of it too. The work of a detective was never very pleasant to me. I always wanted to devote myself to some branch of human industry where I should not be continually rubbing against rogues and fools. It is almost a wonder I did not go into partnership with Smiddens; for I became attached to that young man, and he went on in the kind of life which he had marked out for himself. He took a small farm at Neapfield, and turned it into a large garden; and he has been as successful as he deserved to be. My wife would not hear about risking our bit of money in a partnership. It was annoying; but the simple truth is, that she had so much faith in me that she seemed to suspect anybody else. I cannot express the state of

affairs in any other language, though I am aware that this has a conceited look about it.

Alick Jarvis is with Smiddens. I believe they are partners now. I know they were talking about it the last time I was there. Alick has given up visiting places like the "Pet Lamb," or I am sure Smiddens would never have taken him into partnership. Alick was always a sensible sort of fellow when he was quite sober; and the fortunes and misfortunes of the Naresborough family made a deep impression upon him.

But it seems to me that I am overrunning my story. I have not said anything about the search for Mr. Kemp, after the attempted robbery of Mr. Fenwick. He was not discovered, though I believe every effort was made to find him. He did not return to the Fold after his escape from Smiddens. I suppose he had money upon him; and he must have had a good deal of paper which he had received from his brother in acknowledgment of gambling debts. It was a good thing for the children that he disappeared in the manner he did; for it was generally thought that Mr. Humphrey Naresborough had been given to reckless playing, and that the brother had won nearly everything. However, there was no proof of this;

and the executors went about their business as if such a man as Mr. Kemp had never existed. A will was found at the Fold, among Mr. Kemp's papers, and in that document the property was nearly all left to him; but of course that was set aside by the later will in Mr. Fenwick's possession.

Let me acknowledge here that I had been altogether mistaken about the business capacity of the vicar. When I first saw him, and had dealings with him, I noticed nothing but his scruples, and these seemed to me impracticable. But I found afterwards that real conscientiousness does not destroy the qualities which are necessary for a proper discharge of life's duties.

But no acquaintance which I can trace back to that time has given me so much pleasure as that which I formed with Abraham Smiddens the farmer, with whom the two children of Mr. Naresborough had been left. When I gave up my connection with the force, I went to Longley—for that was where the farm was—and stayed a fortnight. I never knew a family which I liked better. When Mr. Naresborough wanted a place to which he could send his motherless babes, he chose the one family in all England which was likely to meet his utmost expectations.

The children were very beautiful, and very well. They knew nothing about the painful circumstances which had happened at Naresborough Fold. But they had been told that their father was dead. This, however, could not be expected to make much impression upon them. They were too young to understand their loss, and the people whom they had learned to love were all with them still. Mary Smiddens, about whom I had heard from her brother, was like a mother to the children. But Smiddens had not told me everything. There was a nursery governess as well; for Mr. Naresborough had been generous towards his children. He had grudged nothing and stinted nothing. This young lady, Miss Routh, was teaching them; and I soon understood why Smiddens had not mentioned her to me. She was an orphan, and had found a pleasant home at Longley. I do not know that I ought to say that she has a pleasanter home now; but the last time I called on Smiddens at Neapfield she seemed happy enough, with two of her own children about her. No; Smiddens did not tell me everything. Of course his sister Mary had written to him regularly, and so had Miss Routh.

But I am always overrunning my tale. A great

deal had to be done before things settled down into a quiet and peaceful state. Martha Bent was brought to trial, and convicted; and as I have said before, unsuccessful efforts were made to capture Mr. Kemp Naresborough. I do not think the people in that neighbourhood wanted him to be taken. The poor people had a kind of loyalty to the family, which made them feel as if it would be a calamity for one of the members to be put on trial for burglary. I am not sure that the gentry round about were not actuated by similar sentiments. But he was not captured. We heard reports from various quarters, and we followed them up, but they all led to nothing. But the inquiries we made threw a good deal of light on his previous life. He had lived among strange people at times, and had been mixed up with some strange transactions. This was how he became acquainted with Martha Bent; for we had not much difficulty in identifying her. She was well known to the London police, but not as Martha Bent. I think her real name was Ferneux. She was the daughter of a Frenchman who had made a name for himself in connection with forgery and coining. That was the name he had been known by. Some people said his daughter was

cleverer than himself at the evil arts which he practised. I shall continue to call her Martha Bent; it is not worth while to introduce another name now. If she was married—and that was suspected—then her name was not Ferneux. Martha Bent she had always been to me, and Martha Bent I shall call her to the end of the chapter.

We expected a full statement of all the circumstances in connection with the case at the trial. Mr. Kemp had left his accomplice in the lurch, and everybody thought she would clear herself, if possible, at his expense. She was well defended. Somebody found the money for that. Mr. Quivershaft, Q.C., was her leading counsel, and Mr. Piercetall was his junior. But they had a difficult task. The simple truth is, as I heard afterwards, she would not reveal anything. I believe she wanted to plead guilty and have done with it.

Her counsel did the best that was possible for her. I hope I can appreciate a man who does his duty to his client, so I bear no malice to Mr. Piercetall; but his cross-examination of me was rather severe. I am not a detective now, and have no interest in defending any branch of the force; so without being suspected of partiality, I may say, if it is wrong to

be a detective, the nation should neither recognize nor employ them. I always tried to do my duty in the sphere of life which I occupied, and I thought it hard when I was likened to a snake in the grass and a tiger in ambush.

The reader knows exactly how the matter stands. I have told my plain, unvarnished tale. Judge whether my attitude towards Martha Bent was that of the spider towards the fly or not.

The verdict was given without much deliberation. Martha never raised her head, and seemed utterly unconcerned about it. The judge sentenced her to seven years' penal servitude. I thought the sentence very light. She would have had twice as much, or perhaps she would have been sent for life, if there had been any previous convictions against her; but though she was so well known, and her father was such a notorious character, yet she had always kept clear of the courts.

As I have said before, that was my last case. I cannot say that I ever really enjoyed my profession. Not that there is not excitement enough to carry you on; and when you are tracking a rogue, all repugnance for the pursuit is apt to disappear.

So I bought my present cottage, and set up as

bee-keeper on a large scale. Do not let it be supposed that I am ever likely to make a fortune; I neither expect nor desire to do anything of the kind.

I took a last look at Naresborough before I settled down. The Fold was let furnished as it stood when the funeral was over and things had been put straight a bit. Alick Jarvis kept his place as gardener for awhile; but, sad to say, he became too fond of the "Pet Lamb," not only at night, but in the day. He lost his place; but I have already told how Smiddens took pity on him, and how well Alick prospered afterwards. Mrs. Bagshaw never had another lodger like Smiddens. She has always laid the blame on me that she lost him, though I had no more to do with it than the man in the moon.

When I called to see my old friends Tommy and Betty Token, they were still bewildered by what had recently taken place in the neighbourhood. They will need nothing else to talk about as long as they live. Tommy said he thought nobody had been what they seemed:—

"Mr. Kemp Naresborough seemed a gentleman; Martha Bent seemed a quiet, respectable servant;

Smiddens seemed an assistant-gardener; and you seemed a hawker of patent hives."

I bade him good-bye, and told him I was about to settle down at last.

"Do so," said Tommy. "A rolling stone gathers no—you know."

Part III.

The Curse of the Naresboroughs.

By Francis Ribstone, M.D.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO BROTHERS.

If I had my life to live over again, I should not prescribe alcoholic drinks to any of my patients. Medical science has made rapid progress in many directions since I was a young man, but I think the change is seen in nothing so plainly as in the altered attitude of many members of the profession on this subject. We formerly took for granted that it was a good thing to prescribe wine and spirits. Beer we seldom needed to recommend, as everybody drank it. We looked on drunkenness as an evil, and urged people to refrain from it; but we did not recognize the fact that with some temperaments anything like moderation is impossible. I am afraid that many of us looked upon gross drunkenness as we looked upon cancer and consumption—it was a sad thing, but could not be cured. We know better now. Total absti-

nence from alcoholic drinks will starve out the appetite for them, and enable men to live soberly, whatever may be their tendency to live otherwise.

The affairs of the Naresborough family have had a serious influence upon me. I have sometimes wondered whether or not I might have succeeded in preventing the curse which fell upon Humphrey and Kemp, if I had been practically acquainted with the full truth about the danger which lurks in alcohol, and had not been satisfied to treat it in the tolerant or rather friendly and trustful manner which was almost universal at the beginning of my career.

I knew the Naresboroughs well, and I ought to have known that Humphrey and Kemp were in great danger of becoming drunkards. There is scarcely a man of them mentioned in the traditions of the family who was not a drunkard. It could only be mental blindness which made me oblivious to the danger which is suggested by such a fact. And yet I scarcely ever thought of speaking a word of warning to the brothers, either as boys or men, until my power to affect them was reduced to a mere nothing by their complete subjection to their own appetites.

If their mother had lived, it might have been impossible to save them, for her influence seemed always

to be thrown on the side which meant ruin to them; but the task had not become hopeless when she died. Nobody spoke, however, and they went on strengthening the habits which meant ruin to them.

I had hope of Humphrey when I saw the lady whom he had chosen for wife; but Kemp was like an evil genius to him, and seemed to have more power for evil than the wife had for good. Then came that terrible time which left Humphrey a widower; and Kemp's influence increased in fatal strength.

I always said there was a healthy streak in the family, and I sometimes hoped it would predominate. Humphrey from the first had a better nature than his brother. Humphrey's deterioration seemed to be physical and mental; but Kemp's was moral—he became in every sense of the word a bad man.

I was much surprised when I learned that Humphrey had taken pains to have his two children trained in a strictly sober manner. It became evident to me that the father was well aware of the family failing, and was acquainted with the only plan which could be trusted to work a cure. I felt hurt that he had not taken me into his confidence; but it served me right. I had never spoken to him about the subject of drink in the thorough manner which was necessary

to convince him that I should be in full sympathy with his plans. He was wise in the choice he made. Mr. Smiddens, though a farmer, was a man of unusual accomplishments, and was uncompromising in his devotion to total abstinence; and the vicar of Bettenham was one of the noblest-hearted gentlemen it was ever my good fortune to know.

I cannot take to myself credit for seeing at once the excellence of the plan which Humphrey Naresborough had devised; it seemed to me to savour of fanaticism. I remember that I had a long argument with the worthy vicar, and was surprised to find that he had studied the subject far better than I had. I was not prepared to hear him bring forward the physiological side of the question, and argue from that the worthlessness and danger of alcohol. It sounded to me like scientific heresy, and I said so. But I had not to deal with a man who dealt in generalities only. The vicar marshalled his facts and gave his authorities in a manner which bewildered me. I had, like most other people, taken for granted that alcohol was a good creature of God, and that in moderation it was necessary to the welfare of society. That position I looked upon as unassailable. In my early days, we should almost as soon have thought it right to doubt

the demonstrations of mathematics as acknowledge that alcohol was bad in itself, and that the best attitude towards it was one of absolute opposition.

We never like to acknowledge that we are beaten, and I had sufficient human nature in me to make as good a fight as I could, though I must confess that I depended more upon the authority which my position as a medical man gave me than upon my real and accurate knowledge of the subject. As I have already said, I had not studied it. I did not know anybody who had. I had taken for granted that beer, wine, and spirits were good, just as I took for granted that cleanliness and fresh air and exercise were good.

But I resolved to be level with the times, and I procured the works which had been produced by eminent men to show that alcohol is not good for either food or medicine. The change wrought in my opinions was not immediate but gradual. When my eyes became open, I was able to see in my own patients and among my own friends hundreds of proofs that the advocates of abstinence were asserting no more than was true. The painful conviction came home to me that I had encouraged men and women to relapse from sober ways by my own advice. Of

course I had not done it consciously or intentionally, but I had done it nevertheless.

When the truth dawned upon me, I thought I had no need to do anything but state the facts to others and they would be convinced. But I was wofully disappointed; I was met by more strenuous opposition than I had ever shown myself. I had not counted on this. At first I was disgusted with people, and angry; but I have learned to be more patient. We must go on spreading the light, and hoping that it will conquer darkness sooner or later.

I could give many proofs of the incalculable mischief wrought by alcohol; but my purpose is just to tell about the Naresborough family, as their affairs came under my own observation.

If I had known when I was young what I know now, I should have said it was in the highest degree probable that Humphrey and Kemp would become drunkards. They had descended from drunkards, and their surroundings were likely to encourage drunken habits in themselves. It would have been wonderful if they had grown up into sober men. They were born with an appetite for drink, and from their earliest years that appetite was satisfied. We say satisfied, but that is not the right word. The appetite was

gratified; and it grew on what it fed upon. A man is never a drunkard and nothing else. Drunkenness is not merely a physical condition. Now I can look back with unprejudiced eyes, I see that in every case I have known the drunkard has had some grievous moral defect. It is impossible for me to say what kind of men the Naresboroughs would have become if they had been sober, any more than I can tell what would be the effect on the world if the sea were fresh water; but this I know, as they drank they deteriorated. Humphrey lost his self-command, and Kemp became treacherous, until in most things Humphrey was a tool in the other's hand, and Kemp was capable of any vileness to attain his ends.

Humphrey was four years older than Kemp, and when I knew them first the elder brother was kind and playful towards the younger. I have often heard people remark that if Kemp had been the elder it would have been a bad job for Humphrey. Kemp was nervous and irritable as a child; he wanted everything which he saw in his brother's hand. Humphrey was not particularly strong, but if his habits had been wholesome, I think he would have developed into a sound and vigorous man. He was from the first what the country people called easy-

going. This made him a favourite. He was open-handed, and ready to promise anything. Perhaps the promises were seldom fulfilled; but in some places people would rather have promises which never come to anything than have nothing at all.

Mrs. Naresborough, their mother, ought to have had no children; she was not fit to train them. It seems a hard thing to say, but in all probability it would have been better for them if they had been left to the care of guardians. It is very unlikely that they would have been encouraged as they were in habits which demoralized them. She was passionate and impulsive. You never could reckon upon her. To-day's mood would contradict yesterday's, and to-morrow's mood would contradict them both. Her treatment of her sons was most injudicious; there was nothing like settled principle about it. In the morning she threatened them with all kinds of pains and penalties, and in the afternoon she loaded them with favours.

I think Kemp was her favourite. He was the younger, and he was ailing, and he showed more tact in playing upon his mother's weaknesses than Humphrey did. But, as is often the case, the mother's favourite is other people's antipathy. Kemp

Naresborough was not well liked even as a child. I must say that I did not like him. He had a habit of prying and listening which I think often develops into something very mean. Then he was cruel. Kindness to animals is often a matter of training, I know, but the disposition has something to do with it. Kemp Naresborough was fond of torturing things, and he had one very bad quality—he was fondest of torturing somebody's pets. Humphrey was very different from that, and yet his training was the same as his brother's; so disposition has much to do with it.

When the boys were young, I was often sent for to the Fold to prescribe for them. I ordered them wine, as I was in the habit of doing at that time. I ordered them stout also, and more than once I ordered them brandy. Mrs. Naresborough was very anxious about their health. She would abuse them and threaten them; but if they were unwell, she seemed to act like a mad person, especially if Kemp was indisposed.

I do not take to myself the blame of having made those brothers into drunkards, for I know that in their childhood they had drink given to them as a matter of course; but I am sorry that instead of discouraging it I gave sanction to the practice, and was

the means of making the mother think that safety lay in what I now know was their greatest danger. Drink was the last thing they ought to have touched, but it was their daily portion.

I have set myself the task of showing how the Naresborough shame reached its crisis and consummation, or I would not record these details. It fills me with grief to remember what misery and degradation came upon the family; but perhaps this confession may be a warning to others, so I will overcome my repugnance and pursue this painful theme still further.

I do not need to enter into details about Mrs. Naresborough's death. She had become a drunkard. There was nothing to prevent her satisfying the dreadful passion which she acquired for drink, so the end may be surmised. In her rational moments she must have been pained to see that Kemp shunned her. Humphrey remained with her as long as I could permit it; then I had to order him away; and nobody saw the end but myself and the hired attendants. I am surprised that Mrs. Naresborough's deathbed did not make me hate drink ever after; but it did not. I regretted the incident, and lost sight of the cause.

CHAPTER II.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

I DO not know how the young men spent their time while they were away from the Fold after their mother's death. Humphrey brought back a wife, and she was one of the gentlest creatures it was ever my good fortune to know. I always called her Mrs. Humphrey, though she was entitled to be called Mrs. Naresborough. But that name was given to Humphrey's mother in our conversation. The young lady had no idea what kind of life her husband's mother had lived; and, as may be supposed, I did not feel it my duty to enlighten her. Humphrey spoke about his mother with affectionate regard. In this I do not think there was any hypocrisy. Kemp was generally silent about the subject; and yet, as I have said, he had been the favourite. Humphrey was very much steadier for awhile after his return to the Fold. He

still drank to excess at times, as I knew from the fact that he frequently consulted me when he was not well, and I had to expostulate with him and tell him that he was undermining his constitution. My advice always was, "Drink less." I never thought of going to the root of the evil, and saying, "Drink not at all."

Kemp became his master, and Mrs. Humphrey began to fret. She was not willing to make any complaints about her husband, but I could easily see how the case stood, and I spoke to him about it. I assured him she had not said anything, but that my own observation had furnished me with the facts. I need not have been solicitous, however, to prevent Humphrey imagining that his wife had spoken to me about her husband's neglect. I do not think he would have been angry or mortified if I had said, "Your wife tells me you are neglecting her, and it is preying upon her spirits and injuring her health." No man ever had more confidence in a woman, or seemed to regard her with greater reverence. He blamed himself for what he had done, and without any token of displeasure with me he promised amendment. At that time he said nothing against his brother, though he must have known how evil Kemp's influence was upon him.

How much repentance the drunkard wastes! I may be wrong in calling it repentance; but I refer to the sorrow and remorse which they manifest, and which are bitter enough to make them miserable, but not strong enough to keep them from falling before the next temptation which presents itself. I cannot bring myself to reveal the words which were spoken to me at various interviews which I had with Humphrey Naresborough. His wife became very weak; and though she still remained silent as regarded her husband, yet I knew that his frequent absences from home with his brother were causing her keen anguish and disappointment.

I forget how I first became acquainted with the fact that Humphrey was becoming a gambler. My eyes were open to the danger of this passion long before I had right views on the subject of drink. I have never had reason to change my first opinion, that the gambler stakes something besides money. He stakes moral principle, and this he loses whether he wins his wagers or not. When I think about it, I am struck with one thing about gamblers—I have never known a sober one. I may have known sober men who gambled sometimes; but I have never known any with whom the habit became a passion who

were not also excessive drinkers. I am referring to victims now. Of course there are cold-blooded monsters who prey upon their fellows, and who are too well acquainted with the power of drink to trust themselves to it. These men have the cunning disposition and physical temperament which enable them to keep sober while they make their victims drunk. But it is not uncommon for these to be "hoisted with their own petard;" and I have known many of them who, after a short career of cruel villainy, have fallen into hopeless sottishness and poverty. To nobody may the words be more appropriately applied than to the drinker, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I was with Mrs. Humphrey when the twins were born, and when she died. The brothers were away at Chester races. I think if ever a man was on the brink of madness, it was Humphrey Naresborough on his return to his desolate home. He had loved his wife with a great love. I was tempted to write that he had loved her sincerely; but I am not sure that it is right to describe a love as sincere if it be accompanied by practices which break the heart of the object beloved.

Humphrey's bitterness was towards the helpless,

innocent children. He would not see them, and for a time I was afraid that he might do them bodily harm. The funeral took place, and some days passed without any improvement in Humphrey's condition. I became anxious about his sanity. The children were to him the embodiment of cruelty and evil. He began drinking freely, and soon found the company of his brother absolutely necessary. I am sorry to say it, but I do not think he could have found a worse comforter in the whole world.

I spent a good deal of time at the Fold, for the children were in need of almost constant attention. I told Humphrey that they were not likely to live, but this made no impression upon him. I believe Kemp fed his feeling of resentment against his offspring. I had to make various arrangements on the children's behalf; and when I mentioned them, Humphrey sat like a sullen savage, while Kemp sneered and muttered something to himself which I could not hear, but which sounded anything but affectionate.

One day Humphrey came to see me at my house in Naresborough. I had been out all day, and was debating in my own mind whether I needed to go to the Fold that evening or not. As soon as Humphrey

came into my consulting-room I saw that something had happened to him. He was pale and anxious, but he seemed quite sober.

"Is anything wrong with the children?" I asked, for my first thoughts flew to them.

"Yes; everything is wrong with them, and is likely to be wrong with them as long as they live."

These words were spoken in a bitter tone, and sounded like an echo from the utterance of his brother Kemp.

"If we are careful with the children," I said, "there is no reason why they should not grow up to maturity and be a blessing to you."

"They will be a blessing to nobody, not even to themselves," responded the gloomy man.

I have had no tasks in my life which have called for more patience than dealing with habitual drinkers. They are the victims of varying moods, and bewilder one by their vacillation. The tearful stage is often the least hopeful of their conditions. Humphrey began weeping; but instead of this encouraging me to think that he was coming to a right feeling towards his children, I began to feel afraid that it only showed the maudlin side of his own nature. I sat in silence, as I thought it best to let him say all that was in his mind.

"Did the dear angel who has gone to a better world ever complain to you about my conduct?" he asked at length.

"Never," I replied.

"She might have done, and nobody could blame her. I can see it all now. I was selfish and careless, and she was eating her heart out in silence."

I looked upon these words as the outcome of a reproaching conscience; and as they seemed to me only just, I continued silent. Then he asked,—

"Did you know anything about a letter which she left behind?"

"I did not."

The unhappy man took a letter from his pocket and began reading it. As he read he kept muttering, "All true, all true; but it is too late."

"You had better read the letter," he said, handing it to me.

I took the letter and saw that it began, "My dearest husband." Then I said,—

"This letter is intended for your eyes only. Had you not better tell me as much about its contents as you wish me to know?"

"Read it," he replied savagely, "and have it printed in the county paper. It is only right that every-

body should know what I am. I ought to be hooted at by everybody who sees me."

I read the letter. It had been written not many days before Mrs. Humphrey died. She said, if she recovered from her illness she intended to destroy this message; but if she were called away, he would find it in her desk. After the words spoken by the bereaved husband, I expected to find it full of complaints, though my knowledge of the dear lady's disposition might have preserved me from that. His conscience had made him read between the lines, and he had seen many things which the devoted wife had not written. It was a plaintive warning against drunkenness and gambling, and a touching appeal on behalf of any child she might leave behind, begging for the little one, not only unstinted love, which she felt sure she need not mention, but every care to preserve it from the drink which had wrought such ravages in the Naresborough family. I read the letter slowly, and read it more than once. This silent message from the dead filled me with awe. When I looked at Humphrey his face was covered with his hands, and he was still sobbing.

"What must I do?" he asked at length.

"You cannot do better than carry out the wishes expressed in this letter," I replied.

"I cannot bear to see the children," he exclaimed savagely again.

"That is altogether unreasonable," I said, somewhat warmly. "The children are yours, and you must be a father to them in every sense of the word. You will best prove your love to their mother by loving them."

"And what about this drink business?" he asked. "Do you think that the Naresboroughs are rotten to the core, and need to live differently from other people, to keep them from being beasts?"

I was not prepared to say that. To my mind the matter seemed easy and simple. People should drink no more than was good for them. But I answered him indirectly. I said,—

"Love the children, and watch over them. It will do you good in your terrible bereavement. It is time to think of that part now; the other question will come up in after years."

Nothing more passed between us that night, and I promised to visit the Fold on the following day.

From that time, there was a change in Humphrey's attitude towards the poor, motherless darlings. He took an interest in them, and became quite anxious about their little ailments. There was some little

difficulty about naming them. Nothing had been said about this subject before his visit to me; then he became quite impatient about it. The little girl was to be called Ethel after her mother; that was settled at once. I suggested Humphrey, but the father would not hear of this name for the boy.

"He shall have no Naresborough name whatever," he said. "There is a taint about us. We have been drunkards for generations, and now we will make a new beginning." He looked at me as if I had suggested something dreadful.

I tried to laugh the matter away, and said, "You had better call him Samson; he was a water-drinker, you know, and strong enough for anything, except to keep a secret."

I think it was the next day that Humphrey said to me, "I have been reading about Samson, and I think the name will do. He did fail in connection with his secret, but let us hope that our Samson will have no secret to keep. He may be ashamed of the stock from which he sprang; but if so, he may say so. We deserve it—at least I do."

Was this man going mad? He seemed in good spirits again, and I could tell that he had been drinking. But the name Samson was not a bad one for a

boy, and I did not feel that I had any right to raise an objection to it.

The father became as attentive to his children as he had previously been neglectful; and if he had not drunk so much, he might have done very well; but I soon found that he was relapsing into his old habits of excess. Kemp was also at hand, and this was bad for the open and trustful Humphrey. With the renewed drinking excess the gambling was revived, and as I think Kemp was what we call a stronger drinker than his brother—that is, he could carry his drink with a clearer head—I am afraid Humphrey was a considerable loser.

Humphrey did not consult me about taking the children away from Naresborough. I think he had two motives for his action in that matter. He had not full confidence in me as their medical attendant. I could not agree with him in what I thought and called his rabid teetotal views with respect to them, and I would not promise to refrain absolutely from ordering them any intoxicating drinks. I told him under what circumstances I might think a teaspoonful of brandy or a little wine might be necessary for them. At this he went into a towering rage, and said very uncomplimentary things about me and the

members of my profession in general. It seemed unspeakably ridiculous to me that this man should be drinking more than was good for him, and yet he should insist on what I called fanatical measures for his children. The dispute led to unpleasant words, and I told him he had better send for another medical man in future.

But there was another cause at work. It was very easy to see that Kemp had either a contempt or a dislike for the children. He did not take pains to disguise his feelings. I do not like to say that Humphrey thought they might be in danger from their uncle, but I have no doubt myself that it had something to do with his removing them from Naresborough Fold.

He was not the man to bear malice, and I hope I am not inclined to nurse my wrath to keep it warm. When I met him, and he seemed friendly, and proposed that we should "bury the hatchet," I was quite willing to do so. But he would not tell me where the children were.

"Look here, doctor," he said, "you and I shall never agree about those children, and it is no use for us to quarrel. I have made up my mind that they shall have a chance in life, and a very different one

from mine and my brother's. Do you think their mother knows what is going on here?"

"That is a branch of thought which does not come within the lines of medical science," I replied. "The rector would be a great deal likelier to give an opinion than I am."

I could not help thinking that he had become a monomaniac, and I wondered what the end would be. His talk sounded to me almost like the ramblings of the insane. He asked,—

"Did you ever fight a man twice as strong as yourself, and twice as skilful?"

I was compelled to acknowledge that fighting had never been to my taste. But there was such a look of sorrowful earnestness on his face that I could not speak the jest which sprang to my lips. Then his looks seemed to be those of positive agony as he continued,—

"Did you ever fight a man, and fight hard and long, and yet be all the while half conscious that you intended him to win?"

I perceived that there was method in his madness, if it were madness, so I asked what the parable meant.

"You know what it means," he replied, going back to the sad and plaintive mood. "I have tried to

master my passion for drink, but in the midst of the struggle I have seemed to give my enemy advantages. I seem to hate it and like it at the same time. How is a man to conquer when he is divided in that manner?"

It is but the simple truth to say that I did not and could not put myself in his place. I had my own faults and my own sins, but the pitfalls which were fatal to him had no terrors for me, and I was utterly unable to comprehend how fierce a battle it was possible for him to wage, and yet be all the time in secret league with his own adversary. I am afraid my answer would sound harsh and unfeeling to him. I said,—

"The matter is as simple as A B C. If two glasses are more than you ought to have, confine yourself to one; and if one is too much, take only half of it."

Thus I talked, and thus I thought. I would have put drunkenness in the same category as gluttony. If one pound of meat is too much, take less; but you need not give up food altogether. I did not remember that in many people there is an appetite for alcoholic drinks which can only be controlled by being absolutely starved out. I believe Humphrey Naresborough was one of the people, and there are many of them,

male and female, who cannot possibly drink without becoming drunkards. There is nothing by which it is possible to discover beforehand whether a man belongs to this class of people or not. I may be one of them myself. I have had no reason to suppose I am from experience, but I know now that sometimes the weakness does not betray itself until late in life. I have had patients who had continued what are called strict moderate drinkers, until their heads were white with age, and after that they became drunkards. The drinker puts himself into a lottery over which he has no control, and any day he may find himself a helpless victim to the foe which he has learned to look upon with complacency. Past immunity is no guarantee for future safety if dangerous courses are continued, and every drinker is in dangerous courses.

I feel sometimes as if I would give my right hand if I could again have the opportunity to tell Humphrey Naresborough the real truth. Of course I do not know that he would have paid heed to me; that is a kind of half consolation which I think Satan whispers to me, for I believe the tempter is fond of half consolations. But such reflections can never satisfy me. I had a good opportunity to tell a man in what direction absolute safety could be found, and

instead of doing so, I simply commended the plan which was fraught with ruin to him, and which ultimately brought him to a drunkard's grave.

My narrative has little to do with Kemp Naresborough. Life is precious, and while there is life there is hope; but I have often felt that it was better to be in the grave with Humphrey than in the living world with Kemp. There was always a good deal of mystery about him. He had at one part of his life made some very unsatisfactory friendships, and had acquaintances whose influence could not fail to be pernicious. But after he reached manhood he was far likelier to corrupt others than to be corrupted by them. I think he had fathomed most of the depths of iniquity. He was more than a match for his brother. If Humphrey had been absolutely sober, Kemp's superiority would have vanished; for it was only on slippery ground that he was pre-eminent. He could carry his drink better than Humphrey, and he was more skilful at gambling. It seems hard to say that crime could be a fortunate circumstance, but I have sometimes thought that if Kemp could have put in an appearance after his brother's death, he might have shown such a claim to the property that there would not have been much for the children to inherit.

I have never quite understood the connection between Kemp Naresborough and Martha Bent. A friend of mine, who had a London practice, and who was a Bohemian in his habits, wrote me a long letter, at the time after the trial when people were talking a good deal about the case, and he said it was the common opinion among some people whom he knew that Martha Bent was Kemp Naresborough's wife. He did not say who the people were who held this opinion, but I could easily believe that among his acquaintances there were some who knew all about Martha Bent. Still, I have never put any belief in the rumour. Kemp Naresborough was a scoundrel, I know ; but he had a certain kind of pride about him, and he was fully alive to the honour of belonging to an old and important county family.

Humphrey Naresborough killed himself with drink in the prime of life: that is the epitaph which I write upon him here. His sweet and tender wife had died before, and her end was hastened by the silent grief and anxiety which she nursed in her heart. Two young children were left to the care of strangers. This is part of the catalogue of ravages which drink has made among my own acquaintances. Yet at that time I was blind enough to blame the drinkers only,

and to defend the drink. I hope this statement will be like a measure of atonement; for some one may see it, and be warned by it to treat the gigantic enemy of our time as an enemy, and not as a trusted friend.

When I learned all about the paper which Humphrey had left with Mr. Fenwick, I thought it a sign of madness. But I know better now. The man who was falling a quick and ready victim to temptation, was following the impulses of his best nature, and trying to preserve his children from the snares which had compassed his own ruin. This drunkard, influenced by the letter of his dead wife, thought out and inaugurated the only scheme which could be implicitly trusted to preserve his children from the doom which he dreaded. The pity is that he was not as wise for himself as for them.

Part IV.

The Training of the Children.

By Mrs. Fenwick, Bettenham Vicarage.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW HOME FOR THE CHILDREN.

I REMEMBER saying to my husband that there must be some thousands of people in England who are either without children altogether, or who have only a single child; and it did seem strange that with six children of our own we should be expected to take charge of two more. I have never been able to understand why Humphrey Naresborough fixed his mind upon us as likely persons to take this responsibility. My husband said something about my fame for good management and careful training having travelled beyond the limits of our own parish; but I recollect quite well that the father of the children had my husband in view when he thought the vicarage would be just the right place for the young orphans to receive the care which they needed. Mr. Fenwick kept this in the background as well as he could; in fact,

he always keeps his goodness and fame in obscurity, as if they were something to be ashamed of. Then, of course, it was absurd for him to say that the chief responsibility in connection with the children would rest upon me, and therefore I must have been the person whom Humphrey Naresborough was thinking about when he fixed upon us to be father and mother to the orphans. Reasoning like that is not very conclusive, and I am surprised that my husband, with his very clear head, should ever have attempted it.

Samson and Ethel did not come to us immediately after their father's death. Mr. Fenwick and I agreed that they could not be in better hands than with the Smiddens, whom I knew through our having once stayed there in the holidays. We heard regular and satisfactory accounts from Mary Smiddens and Miss Routh, and we went over as often as we could. But when Miss Routh was married to Jacob Smiddens, it was thought best not to engage anybody in her place, but to bring the children to the vicarage, and have them under our own immediate charge.

Mr. Smiddens proposed it. He said, "We have become as fond of the little ones as if they were our own, and wherever they may go to they will find no warmer hearts or better wishes; still, they are likelier

to be fitted for their future position in life with you than with us, and it would be a pity to injure them through standing on ceremony."

I never knew a man who took wiser views of things than Mr. Smiddens. I am not debarred from making this acknowledgment by any delicacy which might be suggested by a recollection of his assurance that he would not have been so ready if he had not known perfectly well that ours was a family in a thousand, for every influence and example which would be likely to benefit and bless the children.

My two eldest sons, George and Ellis, had been several years at Clayton School. George was fourteen, and Ellis was twelve. Then came my sweet daughter Lillian, who, I am sorry to say, had always been a cripple. She must have had a fall in her infancy, but under what circumstances I have never been able to discover. The doctor has said far harsher things than either her father or I. He said, "The servants have it among them, and at least one knows all about it. Very likely they all know. I should like to transport the lot of them. Things will never go right in this country unless we hit the guilty in some way or other, even if we have to make a few aiders and abettors smart at the same time."

You must not think from this that Dr. Newling was a cruel man. Rough and noisy I confess he was, but he was kind to those in trouble, and I think I could say without mistake that I have seen him with tears in his eyes when Lillian was in pain. It was her hip that was bad, and sometimes the pangs would appear to strike through her, and she would scream most piteously. We could do nothing for her to alleviate the agony, which passed away in a few moments. She could not bear us to take any notice of her at such times, and we had to pretend that we were not distressed. But oh, the silent grief we felt!

Talbot and Charles were the next of our children. Talbot was eight, and Charles was six. Then came little Gertrude, who was four years old at the time when we received the strange addition to our family circle. Samson and Ethel were five years old when we removed them from the farm to the vicarage. It was fortunate that our house was large, for I do not believe in crowding children together as some people do. Air is the cheapest thing in the world, I say. Men have not yet invented air-rates as they have water-rates, so let us have as much air as we need. If I had my own way, my husband's study would be better ventilated than it is; but when he

gets the door closed, he is fond of saying, "I am monarch of all I survey;" and he usually adds, "My right there is *one* to dispute."

Let it be understood at the outset that there was abundance of money for the Naresborough children, and that we needed to make no financial sacrifices for them. It was said, I know, that their unnatural uncle could have reduced them to poverty almost, if he had dared to show his face, and make the claims against the estate which successful gambling had put into his hands. He left a number of papers behind him at the Fold, which showed how recklessly his brother had played into his hands. What was done with the papers I never inquired. My own share of the business was quite sufficient for me.

I hope it is not wrong for me to praise my own children. They had never caused me any great anxiety, except the affliction of sweet Lillian. They were very affectionate and very obedient. But when Samson and Ethel came, I felt a sense of responsibility which I had not felt before. I do not pretend that I was more concerned about their welfare than about that of my own dear children, but the circumstances were so very peculiar. I always took it for granted that my own children would grow up soberly and righteously,

though I knew what pitfalls there are in life. But Humphrey Naresborough had chosen us for a special purpose, because he was apprehensive of special danger, and I felt when the children came as if I should never have a peaceful day as long as they remained with us.

My husband laughed at me, though I knew quite well that he was not the man to underrate the importance of our task. He said,—

"Mary, I shall begin to think you are the one woman in the world whom nature has formed for the express purpose of being a stepmother. Your constant and everyday care is quite sufficient for the training of your own children, and you think something extraordinary is demanded for these children, who are not your own. You have missed your way, depend upon it; you ought to have married Mr. Waymiss, I am sure."

Mr. Waymiss was a widower with eight children, who had been attentive to me in a neighbourly sort of way when I was at home and had scarcely passed out of my girlhood.

Then my husband continued:—"What did not come to pass in the ordinary course of things has come to pass in another way. You will have a chance of being stepmother after all."

"Well," I said, "if all stepmothers feel as anxious about their duties as I do about mine, they are a class of people who ought to be very much pitied."

My husband laughed again, and said,—

"But they do not, my dear."

There was one fortunate circumstance about the children. We had not to begin and rectify any mistakes in their previous training. They came to us without the evil impressions which even young children will take from evil surroundings. I did not think we could do better than have Mary Smiddens for their governess, as Miss Routh could not retain that position. I was sure that no better person could be procured than Mary, and my husband was of the same opinion. Mrs. Smiddens raised no objections, if we were satisfied, though she warned us that we must not expect accomplishments such as most governesses are supposed to possess. This was of no importance, for Miss Swinscoe had been coming several hours a day to our own children, and she would be able to teach music or anything else which might be beyond Mary's abilities.

It made a great difference in our household, for there was a nurse besides; and four persons suddenly added to your numbers, as permanent additions, will

upset your arrangements for a time. Our own children were delighted with the change. I do not suppose they would have cared if instead of two there had been twenty-two of the Naresboroughs. I was resolved that from the beginning we would become one family. I intended to look upon the little ones as if they were my own, and I impressed upon my children that a new brother and sister were coming. I also wrote to the boys at school telling them the same. They wrote very affectionate letters back, and said they were sorry both the children were not boys, and both old enough to go to Clayton. The phraseology of the letters was so much alike that I could not help thinking that Ellis had written first, and George had read his letter before replying; for though Ellis was two years the younger, yet he was far readier with his pen than George.

I think Lillian was the most pleased when we announced that the two orphans were coming to live with us, and that they were to be brother and sister to them all. I knew from the first that Lillian was far likelier to be a little mother to them than anything. The quiet life she had to live made her thoughtful, and her sufferings filled her with sympathy. Suffering makes some people selfish. As my

husband has said more than once, it seems to bring the dross to the surface and leave it there; so instead of refining, it only disfigures. But it was not thus with Lillian. I have sometimes thought that she imagined all suffering was as acute as her own, so the crying of a fretful child would fill her with consternation.

Talbot wanted to know all about the children, and how they could be his brother and sister. My husband called him a born metaphysician. He always wanted to know the why and wherefore of everything.

Charles and Gertrude set off together to the nursery; for it was in our little school-room that I had told my news. When I went into the nursery, I found them busy with their toys, which they had divided into four shares. When I asked what they were doing, Charles replied, pointing to two lots of toys,— "Those are for new brother and sister."

CHAPTER II.

SETTLING DOWN AT THE VICARAGE.

It was spring time when we received our children at the vicarage. I was tempted to write "guests," or "visitors;" I even thought about the desirability of writing "charge." But it is best to say "children;" for I felt when they came that they would be ours always, as much as if they had been born to us.

Spring is a lovely season at Bettenham; so indeed are the other seasons, but I like spring. For a few days we seemed strangely upset, but things quietly settled down again. My husband was a good deal in the nursery at first. He did not tell me his reason, but I could read it as plainly as if it had been written on his forehead—he did not want all the new responsibility to fall upon me. I suppose he felt that it was chiefly through his reputation that we had been chosen to fill the place of parents to the orphans, and he did

not wish to shirk his share of trouble. But what good is a man in the nursery? I knew he wanted to be among his books, so I told him that we should manage the children very well. He was not offended in the least. I will say it, who perhaps ought not, but I have never known my husband to make either himself or others uncomfortable by that silly and selfish habit which is usually called standing on our dignity.

The children brought their blessing with them. Of that I am now sure, and I ought to have known it from the first. I felt recompensed for all my trouble and anxiety when I saw the delight of sweet Lillian. These little ones seemed to bring new sunshine into her life; and she needed it, for she suffered very severely at that time. She had her little crutches, and went about the house singing, in a low musical voice, such hymns as she had learned. None of our other children seemed musical, but Lillian knew all the tunes she had ever heard.

My husband could not do with a noise in the house when he was in his study, but Lillian's singing never disturbed him. I was glad it was so, for she liked to go about anywhere, and sing as she went. I have seen her seated on the stairs, near the study door,

singing the hymns which she loved; and if I have entered the study, my husband has been writing, as if the house were perfectly still. Lillian was always fond of the nursery, but she frequented it more than ever when her new brother and sister were there.

Ethel was much quicker than Samson. My husband sometimes said, "Girls are always quicker than boys; they develop faster, but their development stops sooner." It was very well for him to say that, but I never agreed with him. My doctrine was, "We must take facts as they arrive, and not attempt to discount them by prophesying about the future."

I am always sorry for people who are crowded together in towns, and who cannot see the changes which come over things in the spring time. I have always tried to train in my children a love of nature. There were little plots in our garden appropriated to them, and I always took a delight in teaching them the names and nature of various plants and flowers. George and Ellis had their own little gardens, but these had to be looked after in their absence at school.

It is strange how the tastes of children differ. Ellis was much fonder of books than his elder brother, and I think often helped him with his lessons; but in the garden George turned the tables, and seemed to

attend to Ellis's plot as well as his own. Even the youngest of my children, as soon as they were able to understand anything, had their little gardens, and I encouraged them to do the best they could to dig and sow and plant for themselves. It was not easy for Lillian to dig, but she tried; and I am glad to say the dear child had never to ask for help—her brothers were delighted to assist her. When the elder ones were at school, Talbot was always willing to do his best. But, as we sometimes said, Talbot's best was often inconvenient. He liked to try experiments, and his garden often showed the result of them in barren failures. He would have spoiled the other gardens too with his attempts at originality, but was compelled to confine his new theories to his own domain.

Each child had also a bee-hive; but that was too serious a matter for individual interference. The hive went by the child's name, and the honey was chiefly appropriated to the child's benefit, but others had to do the work and take the responsibility.

I have always had strong opinions about cruelty to animals; and I must confess, in spite of the love I have for the country, that this is a point which is not sufficiently attended to in those rural districts

with which I am acquainted. I think cruelty is cruelty, and if we are cruel to anything there is danger of our being cruel all round. I know that some of my neighbours have told me about people who had no special fondness for dumb creatures, but who had as much natural affection as was good for them. It is always difficult to argue about individuals in connection with a subject like this; and I have had to content myself with saying that kindness of every description is far too scarce, and is not likely to be abundant unless it is cultivated towards all God's creatures.

Lillian, as might be expected, was my most ardent disciple on this subject. She could not bear cruelty of any kind towards any creature. Perhaps I should not be wrong if I said that Talbot was the least ready to adopt the opinions which I impressed upon my children. He never cared as much about pets as his brothers and sisters, and in very early life would argue about the lower creatures in a very unpleasant manner. He was not cruel, but I have often thought that he might have become a cruel man if he had not been very carefully trained.

My husband was as much in favour of kindness to animals as I was, but when we were alone he was

fond of charging me with hobby-riding. I do believe it is impossible to carry any subject or pursuit to its reasonable and consistent conclusion without being charged with hobby-riding. I wonder how many people have shaken their heads at both him and me because of our thoroughness on the drink question. Total abstinence, as we understood it, was not so easy then as it has become since. We would not have any kind of intoxicating drink in the house, and this made the duties of hospitality very difficult, as some of our friends looked upon it as an insult to invite them and not provide for them as they were accustomed to provide for people. Nobody was ever so rude as to tell us to our faces that our scruples had the convenience of being economical, but there were candid tale-bearers who took care to inform us that such things were said behind our backs. This was very disagreeable; but my husband frequently said it would be a great deal more disagreeable if it happened to be true. I did not think so then; I do now.

I had been afraid of sending the boys to Clayton School; for beer was provided there, and I have heard my husband say that in his time it would have been thought as natural for a boy to sleep on the

floor, instead of sleeping in a bed, as to refuse beer. But he said things had improved to some extent, and George and Ellis were not likely to be persecuted for their abstinence; and as they would have to go into the world sooner or later, and face difficulties and temptations, he was not afraid of trusting them at school. Children are capable of showing considerable heroism, and I think my sons were only strengthened in their resolutions by the opposition which they met. We did our best to show them why they ought not to drink; and I believe the thought of doing so did not enter seriously into their views of possible conduct for them.

It may be said that I am fonder of writing about my own children than about the orphans who had been committed to our charge; but I wish to show what kind of home they had come to, and what kind of training they were likely to receive. They were to be in every respect like our own offspring, and to receive the same teaching for this world and the next, which we constantly prayed that God would bless to the temporal and eternal welfare of our sons and daughters.

George and Ellis, who were at school, both knew something about the Naresborough misfortunes; for

they happened to be at home the first time our house was broken into, and they afterwards learned all about Kemp's share in that series of mysteries which perplexed and distressed us so much at the vicarage. The younger children knew nothing about it, and it was our intention that nothing should ever be said to the orphans about their family disgrace. Our servants were strictly forbidden to mention it, and so was their nurse. Mary Smiddens, of course, was just as earnest as we were in her desire that nothing unpleasant should be communicated to the children under her charge.

My husband and I often regretted that the time would come when, in order to perform the father's dying request, it would be necessary to inform Samson and Ethel about the family failing, and the reason for their training in strict abstinence from drink. I was not so certain about the necessity for this as my husband seemed to be. I said to him that the dead could not bind the living to follow a course which might prove to be undesirable. We would train the children in what we thought was the right way, and then we might safely leave them to carry out the principles which we instilled into them.

"That would be like performing the pleasant part of a duty, and neglecting the unpleasant part," he replied. "Who can tell how strong the latent appetite for drink may be in these children, and how ignorant they may be of the fact, unless we lay all the circumstances of the case before them."

I did not like him to speak about both boy and girl as if they were equally liable to become drunkards. In our neighbourhood we had many men who drank to excess, but no women, as far as I knew. This I told him. But he insisted in maintaining the opinion that I was wrong, and said that it was not a matter of theory, but a fact supported by undeniable evidence, that drunkenness was alarmingly prevalent among women, not only among the poor, as some people in the upper classes conveniently pretended, but among the educated and the fashionable. He even went so far as to say that our own neighbourhood was not so free from guilt in this respect as I imagined.

I might have known that it was no use to ask him for particulars on this last point. He was not a gossip or a tell-tale. But I have seen for myself since then, and have witnessed the degradation of people whom I thought would have died sooner than become drunkards.

"Never mind," said my husband, "we must not look too far into the future; the children have not reached the years of discretion yet. Let us do the duties of the present, and God will show us what is right from day to day."

CHAPTER III.

ANXIETIES ABOUT THE FUTURE.

I WAS never able to notice when my own children first began to manifest varieties of disposition. When children are with us from the beginning, the signs of individuality, as my husband calls them, appear so quietly and gradually that we do not notice them. But it is different when a boy and girl five years old are brought into your family. Though they are brother and sister, and are twins, yet they are not a bit alike. Probably there will be a physical resemblance, but I am speaking of the mood and disposition.

Samson was self-willed from the first. I was afraid that Mary Smiddens had spoiled the children, but I soon found her showing so much kind firmness that my suspicion was removed. My husband always takes the hopeful view, if there is one; and he said we must not be too much concerned about the self-will of a

child who is likely to want more than an average share of firmness. But I said, "Obstinacy is almost as bad as fickleness."

"No, my dear," he replied; "sanctified obstinacy would be a very fine quality. It may be the element which we unconsciously admire in some of the bravest men. What sanctified fickleness would be I cannot imagine. Samson will perhaps need as much strength as his namesake, so we must not be discouraged if he sometimes misdirects his firmness. If he seemed cruel or spiteful, that would be another thing; it would be very terrible. It is well that he has not the flexible, easily-persuaded disposition of his father; but it would be terrible if he had the unfeeling selfishness of his uncle Kemp."

I am thankful to say I could not contradict him on this point; for Samson was generous, like his sister, and he was affectionate too. I cannot imagine that Kemp Naresborough was either.

Ethel must have been like her mother—quiet, submissive, and gentle. She won all our hearts, as, indeed, both the children did. Perhaps I may say it was easy to love Samson, but it was impossible not to love Ethel. They soon became part of our life, and we could scarcely imagine our home without them.

As my husband would say, "It is wonderful what trouble we make about things which ought to be rejoiced over. We doubt them beforehand, and suffer more from our thoughts of them than we even do from our experience of them. It is a pity, Mary, that we forget we are to walk by faith, not by sight."

There was one thing in our educational system which I think is uncommon enough to deserve mention. I refer to the teaching of total abstinence. Most people who practise it seem to think that they have performed their duty to their children by setting a good example; but I have always thought that example and precept should go together. As soon as my children could understand things, I told them we were all abstainers, and I explained to them the reasons why this course was adopted. The same plan was pursued with respect to the Naresboroughs, and, of course, what was said to them was just the same as was said to our own children. We never hinted that there was any special danger to be apprehended.

Young children are a great deal of trouble, but I have sometimes thought there is more satisfaction in what we do for them than in what we do for those who are older. My husband often laughed at me when I expressed this opinion. He said I was like

the people who regretted that kittens ever became full-grown cats. I think he was right; but I am not ashamed to own that I have sometimes wished that kittens would remain kittens all their life.

As I look back to these years about which I am writing, the events seem crowded together in the distance, and I am unable to arrange them in their proper order. In my mind the past seems painted in quickly-changing pictures, showing striking episodes, but leaving the happy every-day life undistinguished. Through all the scenes, as my mind presents them, I have glimpses of my own sweet Lillian, with her thin face, which is often pale with agony, and she is going about on her little crutches among her play-fellows. Of course there were disagreements among the children, as there always are, but nobody disagreed with Lillian. Samson's self-will was disarmed when she was with him, and he always complied with her wish, however unwelcome it might be.

The first time our boys came home from school for the holidays, they seemed to notice a great change in the household, as was only natural. But after that, everything went on as if we were really one family.

There are only two things which stand out in those early years as great troubles to me. One was the

marriage of Mary Smiddens. If I had been thinking about myself or my own children, I should have been selfish to grudge her happiness. I knew soon after she came to me that her stay would not be a lengthy one. Her heart had been given to a young yeoman in her own district, and I must say that if anybody could be worthy of her it was Mark Knowles. The dear girl was so attached to the children that she seemed unwilling to leave them, and Mark had to wait for her much longer than he expected. But at last the time was fixed, and I had to look round for somebody to take her place. My husband is always telling me that unpleasant things have their compensations. I think it is also true that pleasant things have their penalties. It is so in connection with true attachment like that which existed between our household and Mary. When she went away, we felt as if we had lost something which could never be replaced. But we were fortunate in finding a good successor, though we never had anybody who was like Mary.

The children had been about three years with us when Mary Smiddens was married. Our Talbot was eleven, and Charles was nine, while Samson was eight; so we decided that we would have a tutor for the boys, and that the new governess should have charge

of the girls only. My husband had never had a curate, as the parish was small; but he engaged Neville Ross, the son of a very old friend, and Neville took charge of the boys a few hours each day.

I never knew anybody who had a better way with boys than Neville Ross. He was young and healthy and full of enthusiasm, and seemed to pour his own spirit into his pupils. I need scarcely say that on the question of temperance he was as earnest as we were ourselves. He was made acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the Naresborough family, and entered heartily into the plan for breaking the spell which for generations had wrought ruin among them. He did not find Samson very quick at learning, not nearly so quick as either Talbot or Charles. But he often said, "It is possible that Samson may do as well as either of them. He may even excel them, for he has a wonderful amount of perseverance. If he ever takes thoroughly to learning, he will do well; but he does not seem to care about it now."

As the boys grew older and their tastes became more developed, Samson soon showed a decided preference for field sports, and especially for cricket.

Neville Ross was a good cricketer, and had been well known at Cambridge for his skill in this depart-

ment. I have seen cricket players, but I have never been able to understand the game. To me it seems rather tedious. My husband always laughs at me when I say so. He is not a player, and never was, but he is almost as enthusiastic about it as any school-boy. There was no cricket-ground in Bettenham at the time when Neville Ross came, and our two eldest sons knew nothing about the game until they went to school; but Neville Ross said this was a defect which must be remedied. He told me that cricket was far more important than bee-keeping, and if I would put into cricketing some of the zeal which I expended on hives and honey, I should prove a true friend to the community.

Neville had more success with many of our neighbours than he had with me. The Guises of Bettenham Hall took up his scheme with heartiness, and allowed one of their fields to be used for a cricket-ground. Money was given, and a pavilion was built. Then Neville said we were civilized, and exclaimed, "To think that I needed to come here and do a work like this! I feel like a pioneer. My name ought to be inscribed on the roll of fame which is preserved to immortalize those who have penetrated new regions and spread the light of civilization."

It was pleasant to hear him, for he had a cheery way. He was well built and handsome. His hair was flaxen, almost to whiteness; but there was a healthy glow upon his face, and a brightness in his eye, which seemed to suit his ringing voice.

When the boys were home from school they seemed to spend all their time in the cricket-field with Neville. He secured their sympathies readily, and made them play "with a soul," as he called it, though I could scarcely help thinking that it was a perversion of words.

I have seen them all together there many a time, with some of the neighbours' sons, and it seemed very hard work to me. George and Ellis had played at school, and knew something about cricket; but Neville only shook his head at them, and told them they must have lost many golden opportunities in their life, or they would have been able to play much better. Talbot and Charles tried their best, and Neville said they would do tolerably well some time; but he never failed to tell them that in a few years he believed Samson would be able to play the whole family at single wicket and beat them.

I must confess that I was not altogether gratified with this information. It was not jealousy for my

own children, I am sure. Cricket did not seem to me to be important enough to make it of any consequence whether a boy became prominent in it or not. My feeling was one of anxiety lest Samson should become fond of all sports, and should be drawn by them into company which would do him more harm than good. I mentioned this to my husband and to Neville, but they said I was mistaken. My husband said he could only speak theoretically. He had never been anything but a looker-on at the games of others; but Neville could speak from experience. He said physical exercise was favourable to temperance, because temperance was favourable to physical exercise.

"You take care of yourself if you wish to excel in athletics. I often told the men at Cambridge that they were obliged to agree more or less with me in practice when they had a severe task before them. There is no drink like water for training on. If I could take a team of cricketers who know the game and can play well, and could persuade them to abstain entirely from intoxicating drinks, they would become almost invincible. Many a cricketer who is not a teetotaler will say the same."

These words of Neville's reassured me, but I was always thinking about our task. I had no fear for

Ethel; she was likely to spend a quiet life. But Samson would go to school, and then to Cambridge, and we should not be always with him, and we should not be able to control him. I wanted us to do what was best in laying a foundation upon which the future life might be built with safety and success.

CHAPTER IV.

PARTINGS.

When I mentioned, some time ago, that Mary Smiddens left us to be married, I said that we suffered two losses at that time. The other one I have shrunk from mentioning, for it was the bitterest heart-trial we ever had. I refer to the death of our sweet Lillian.

At first I thought I should never be reconciled to this bereavement, but when I remember her sufferings, and know that nothing could relieve them, it is impossible to murmur against the good Father in heaven who took her to himself. She was like a little woman, and in her thoughtfulness taught us all something of our duty. She lived for others, and seemed to devote herself specially to the orphans. I have often thought since that Ethel appeared to become like Lillian, and my husband has often said, "It seems as if Lillian's

spirit had entered into Ethel—I could readily imagine this child my own."

That was only a fancy, of course; but even the tones of Lillian's voice and some of her gestures were adopted, so that the impression became strong at times that our dear child was still among us.

Though Samson was so self-willed, yet he never showed it much in Lillian's presence. There was true chivalry in him during those early years, and because he knew that certain ways would give Lillian pain he restrained himself. When I noticed it, I comforted myself with the thought that all such qualities promised well in connection with his future manhood. I remember saying to my husband one day,—

"There must be very noble qualities in Samson's disposition, or he would not be so tender and yielding to our dear Lillian's wishes. If it were not for signs and proofs like these, I should feel afraid about him, lest when he becomes a man he should break loose from our restraint, and from the principles which we are trying to instil into him."

Any remarks of this kind were sure to plunge my husband into one of his thoughtful moods, and I was sorry afterwards for having made them.

"He has the nature which will develop into a

noble manhood," he said, "if he escape the pitfall of drink."

So this aspect of the danger was continually brought before us. Many people would have laughed or sneered at us for our anxieties, and would have told us that we wronged the boy by harbouring such thoughts; but we knew too much about people who have fallen in manhood because they would not take the care of themselves which others had taken of them, to think that solicitude in this matter was mere fancy.

For some time before Lillian died she was confined to her room. It is supremely painful for me to recall those times and write about them. I would not do so, but I have always thought that the sweet child's sickness and death were a real educational influence upon all of us. For a long time after there was a marked seriousness about all our household. Even the servants loved her, and regarded her words as they regarded the words of nobody besides. Sweet Lillian! her memory is treasured by some who are now the mothers of children, and who are living in poverty and striving with hardship. There was Jane who married the quarryman, and is living among the Welsh hills; and there is—but if I take up that strain

I shall never have done. I know that some of them tell their own children about the sweet child who faded away among us all.

George and Ellis were at home when Lillian died, for it was in summer time. They are both men now, but I believe the memory of Lillian is as vivid still as it was during those long summer days when her grave was fresh, and they spent so many heart-broken hours near it.

In the years which came after I always counted it among the probabilities of well-doing on the part of all our family, the Naresboroughs as well as the others, that they had known Lillian.

When George left Clayton School he stayed at home awhile before he went to Cambridge. His tastes were not scholarly, and he had no strong desire for a university life. But his father wished it, and George gave himself up with greater zeal to the task of preparation. In Neville Ross he had the best helper it was possible to find anywhere. Two years afterwards Ellis left school, and he went to Cambridge also. I need not say anything about his success in winning the much-prized Clayton Scholarship, and his triumph in also obtaining a scholarship at Cambridge. I refer to these facts only because it was about the

time when we had to decide upon sending Samson to school.

Neville Ross had been with us all the time, but a college living was presented to him, and he was about to leave us. It was like losing one of ourselves; for though he had not actually resided at the vicarage, yet so much of his time had been spent there that he was like one of the family.

Talbot had not been sent to school, as we thought it best that he should stay at home with Samson and Charles.

Neville always said Talbot ought to go to school quite young, as he was far too argumentative for a quiet life with two younger boys, and a tutor whose weakness was to spoil everybody.

"Boys need the discipline of boys," he would say in his laughing way. "Boys can do for them what a man cannot."

But it was not Talbot we were thinking about. He was opinionative, it is true. He was too fond of setting up his own judgment, and questioning things which might safely be taken for granted. Still we were not troubled by any doubts concerning his future. It is hard to say whether we were too complacent about our own children, or too uneasy about those

who had been intrusted to us; but I am sure we dreaded what might happen to Samson when he left us far more than we had dreaded the fate of George or Ellis. We took for granted that our boys would not forsake the ways in which we had trained them, and we could not easily take the same thing for granted with respect to Samson.

I remember my husband and Neville Ross and myself were together one night just before Neville went away, and we were discussing this subject in the study; for that was the room my husband liked best, and I think Neville was as fond of it as he was.

My husband was wondering whether Samson ought to go to Clayton or to one of the more celebrated schools. He declared that he did not think there was a better school in the kingdom than Clayton, but the Naresborough property would well afford the expense of Eton or Harrow.

"Eton and Harrow are thought more of than dear old Clayton," said Neville; "but I cannot say that I ever regretted that my lot had not been cast in either of them. Clayton is large enough to constitute a sort of boys' world; it has varieties of character and provides varieties of experience. A school must do that, or it fails in its purpose. Then the boys who go there

are good enough for anybody to mingle with. A fair proportion of them are parsons' sons, and though I may be considered a partial witness, as I am a parson's son, and now a parson myself, yet I cannot help thinking they are a wholesome element in a school. They usually have tastes for scholarship, and as a rule they are not cursed with too much money. Nothing is worse for a boy than to have unlimited money at his disposal. Yea, perhaps one thing is worse, and that is to be constantly in the company of boys who have too much money, and to be himself without."

"George and Ellis both speak well of the school," my husband replied. "I mean they speak well of the tone which prevails among the boys in private. I have never cared to ask too many questions, for I remember that when I was young there were things said and done at Clayton which I should not have cared to mention to my father. But I have mentioned to George my anxiety on account of Samson. I believe if he never takes drink he will never go wrong. I hope my dread of this evil is not so great that it prevents my seeing others. That would be a grievous mistake. I sometimes feel inclined to keep him here until he is of age. That, of course, is never my intention, but the fancy comes before me many a

time. He is quite removed from the chance of drink here, but that will not be the case at Clayton."

"But George and Ellis remained abstainers at Clayton, and we have no reason to expect that Samson would do otherwise." Neville was speaking, and he was very sanguine in his tone. "The boy will have to face the world sooner or later, and the temptations at Clayton are not overwhelming. I suppose Talbot and Charles would go at the same time, so there would be companions in tribulation, if the position of a teetotaler at school deserves so serious a name. I believe Samson would take his stand at first on the temperance side—in fact, I feel sure of it—and then he would not be likely to turn away from it. Cambridge—if he goes to Cambridge—will be a far severer trial. But I can trust the boy."

Neville Ross was one of the most hopeful men I ever knew. It made people like my husband seem quite despondent to be in his company, the contrast was so great. But then, as my husband sometimes said in self-defence, "the temperament of a person who looks at facts makes no difference to the facts themselves. Danger does not seem danger to some people, but it is danger for all that."

I knew what was troubling my husband's mind,

for we had already discussed the matter frequently and thoroughly. He was not sure whether or not the time had come to give Samson the paper which had been left in his charge by Humphrey Naresborough, the boy's father. Some men would not have debated this question for an hour; they would have done it, or left it undone, according to their impulse. My own feeling was that it would not be well to give the paper into the hands of a boy so young. I did not even like the idea of telling him the story of his father's sorrow and shame. When the matter was mentioned to Neville Ross, he took the same view.

"Samson is very sensitive," he said, "though many people would doubt it. There is nobody more sensitive than some of the high-spirited, self-willed boys who are thought to have hides as thick as the rhinoceros."

Then there was a pause, which at length was broken by my husband, who said, "I have thought about this question, and prayed about it. I trust what I do will be the best thing under the circumstances. I will tell him before he goes away that he has more reason to be afraid of drink than most people, and I will ask him to promise me that he will not take any without first acquainting me with his

intention. I think he will make the promise—it is not unreasonable in its nature; and I believe he will keep the promise. Then if ever the time comes when he changes his views about total abstinence, I shall have the opportunity of telling him how the case stands. He must not be allowed to run into danger with his eyes shut, though the task of opening his eyes might be painful to me."

Neville agreed that this was an excellent plan, and he predicted that it would work well. This was all we said about the subject. We talked about Neville's future, and wished him long life and happiness in the sphere which he was going to occupy.

CHAPTER V.

A LUKEWARM DISCIPLE.

During all our life at Bettenham, I cannot remember a time when we seemed so deserted as after Neville Ross left us for his new parish. The three boys went to school at the same time, and nobody was left with us except Ethel Naresborough and our youngest child Gertrude. I have often thought that it was a good thing Gertrude was a year younger than Ethel. If Ethel had been the youngest person in the household, I am sure she would have wasted much precious love on her dolls; and that can never be the same as loving a human being. She was a very affectionate child to everybody, but it seemed as if she must have a companion younger than herself, whom she could help, and for whom she could make sacrifices.

I have said that Ethel resembled my own dear Lillian. As the years passed away, I seemed to asso-

ciate the two together more closely, until sometimes, and in absence of mind, I called Ethel by the name of my dead child, and this always caused great pain to her. She did not understand how anybody could forget for a moment that Lillian had left us, and she was unable to comprehend that it was because I loved my child so much I sometimes spoke as if she were still with us.

It was always our endeavour to treat the Naresborough children as if they were our own. They called us father and mother in their infancy, and the habit continued with them. Our own children were under strict orders to say nothing which could remind the orphans of their lonely position in the world. It was not our desire to deceive them in any way, neither were they ever under the impression that we were their parents; but it was not well to emphasize before them the fact of their bereavement. I daresay the subject was often talked about among the children themselves. As they grew older, I have heard them speaking about the advantages of having two fathers and mothers instead of one. In their simple fashion they did not desire to divide the family, but it was their wish that there should be two fathers and two mothers who should be fathers and mothers to all of them.

Though I was sorry the orphans had no living parents, yet only one thing would have given agony to my grief, and that would have been furnished by any evidence that Samson and Ethel felt themselves at a disadvantage among children who had father and mother. There are many contradictory feelings in our hearts. I did not want these orphans to forget their dead parents; yet I did not want them to grow up feeling that they were short of something without which life could not be complete.

My husband often laughed at my nice distinctions, as he called them, and said that, like many nice distinctions, they were somewhat inconsistent with each other. But he persisted in saying the world never had my equal as a stepmother, and it was almost a pity I had not found a sphere where I could show my qualities to perfection. I wanted to talk to the children about their own parents, in spite of the jealousy which my husband jokingly ascribed to me. He, however, doubted the advisability of this plan.

"Let us be to them all the father and mother they need," he said. "That is far better than making them sad with a tale of loss and sorrow. Their mother we might talk about from morning till night,

and never say a word which was not true, and which would not serve to enshrine her in her children's hearts. But what could we say about the father? We might dwell on his good qualities only, and say nothing about the faults. I doubt, however, whether that would be either right or expedient. I suppose the day will come when they will have to read their father's confession. He does not spare himself in that paper, and I am afraid it would lead to a shattering of idols which would be bad for the persons concerned. No; the fact of their being orphans is patent to them, but they must be made by us to feel that position as little as possible."

I think my husband's ideas were right, and they seemed to work well. As far as I could discover, the Naresborough children grew up as happily as our own sons and daughters.

Ethel was eleven and Gertrude was ten when the three boys went to school. The first difficulty which arose in my mind was about letter-writing. I did not feel sure at first whether the brother and sister should write to each other exclusively or chiefly; or whether we should continue the plan of ignoring the differences, and instruct the children to write to each other in turn. The latter plan was decided upon, as

being more consistent than the other with the policy which we had adopted.

I remember the first letter which Ethel wrote to her brother. If he had been there she would have had as much to tell him as twenty letters could contain; but she had to appeal to me for information which it was well to convey to Samson. She wrote about half a page readily enough, and then she seemed to have exhausted her store.

"What must I tell him now?" she asked, turning her puzzled look towards me.

It was always my plan to expect children to write their own letters, and to spell the words according to their own fancy. Then I read them through, and made a mark against the words which were wrongly spelled. The words might be corrected by the help of a child's dictionary, but I would not correct them myself.

"Now, Ethel, my dear," I said, "you must try to think that Samson is already back from school, and that you are talking to him. Put in the letter exactly what you would say."

"But Samson would begin talking first," she answered, with a bewildered look; "and he would ask me all sorts of questions, and I should tell him what he wanted to know."

"Well, cannot you imagine him here, and imagine the questions which he would ask? He will care far more for your letters if you write them out of your own heart than he would if I were to tell you what to say."

Ethel asked no more questions, but went on with her letter, and managed to fill four pages; but the writing was rather large, and certainly the lines were widely apart.

The letters had to be directed, and this part of the task was performed by the children in consultation, and I heard them discussing the reason why one should be addressed to Samson Naresborough and the other to Charles Fenwick. Talbot was Fenwick, and so were Ellis and George; why should not Samson be Fenwick too, and not Naresborough only? Gertrude could throw no light upon this difficulty, but Ethel thought it must have something to do with herself and her brother having two fathers and mothers, instead of only one of each kind, like the other members of the family.

I am not aware that the difficulty presented itself again. Henceforth the letters were written and directed, and nothing was said about differences of name. I doubt whether the same thought presented

itself to Samson; he was too matter-of-fact, and had too much of the go-ahead spirit about him, to pause and ponder over a matter of such trivial importance.

It was a happy time for us when the holidays came, and brought with them our three boys. I have heard people complain about holidays, and wish their children could remain at school all the year round. It is not for me to sit in judgment upon others, but I never could understand the feelings of those parents who would not rather have their children at home than anywhere else. I will speak for myself and say, that I counted the days which intervened between my boys' going away and coming back again as anxiously as the boys themselves did.

The first school term seemed the longest. Ethel and Gertrude made it seem longer to me by their impatience. They also kept count of the days by means of an almanac, and talked daily about the slow flight of time.

But the holidays came at last, and the boys were more boisterous than ever. Talbot was more like other boys than he had been before he left home. Samson and Charles had grown and become a bit rougher, but in nothing else could I detect any change.

We soon learned that the boys at school had dubbed them with the name Rechabites. I think Talbot gloried in the title, as he would have gloried in any nickname whatever which had referred to his personal views or peculiarities. Charles had sheltered himself behind Talbot, as he was likely to do. I have sometimes thought it was well that Charles had not to bear the brunt of any attack alone. Perhaps I should wrong him if I hinted that he would have failed in the performance of his duty, but I am sure he would have suffered more than usual if he had been called upon to act differently on any point from all those about him. I fancied, from what I heard, that Samson looked upon his position as unnecessarily disagreeable. Perhaps fear of failure on his part made me exaggerate the importance of slight evidence, but it is certain that I felt uneasy about him when I noticed his attitude towards the measure of disagreeableness which had attended his teetotalism at school. There had not been anything like persecution, but there had been some amount of scorn.

My husband said,—

"It is quiet contempt which will try Samson more than anything. If he lived among people who told him he must drink or they would compel him, I am

sure they would have to pour it down his throat by main force before they could compel him to do their will; and then he would be a firmer teetotaler than ever. Martyrs are often strengthened by circumstances, and often owe their inflexibility to the fierceness with which their enemies attack them. I must talk to him about this, and show him that it is a nobler and braver thing to be true, when we have nothing to support us in our trials except a knowledge of right and a desire to do it, than when our anger and coarser passions come to our help and assist us in the time of temptation."

I soon found that it was not possible to make Samson feel much interest in the temperance question. He said he did not care much about it, but he would not disappoint us. It did not matter to him if fellows did call him Rechabite. They would be pretty sure to call him something, and they might as well call him Rechab Tertius as anything else.

We had faith enough in him to know that he would not break his word; and he had given the promise which he was asked to give, that he would not take any intoxicating drink without first informing my husband of his intention to do so.

Thus the time passed on, and our anxiety was

lessened, for we heard less in subsequent holidays about any hardship which was felt by the boys at school. I suppose their companions became accustomed to their peculiarities on the matter of temperance, and ceased to notice it. Samson received a new nickname. He was called Eugene Aram, not because he was supposed to resemble that character, but because Eugene Aram was connected with Knaresborough in Yorkshire; and as Naresborough was a similar name, the schoolboy mind found sufficient cause for giving a title which was anything but flattering to the recipient.

CHAPTER VI.

BRINGS MATTERS TO A CRISIS.

STRANGERS who came to Bettenham could not understand why we wanted to go away in the summer. I think my husband agreed with the strangers, for he was never tired of talking about the inconvenience of staying in lodgings at the sea-side. He had all the customary remarks ready about the degeneracy of the times, and about the stay-at-home fashions of his early life. But I believe he enjoyed himself among the sand and sea-weed as much as any of us. When the time came to discuss what place we should visit, he was never without an opinion regarding the qualities of the various resorts suggested. Of course he professed to be indifferent, and he said any spot would suit him. The children were the chief consideration, and he would be guided by any plan which was best for them.

Yet I am sure it was he who suggested Bridlington Quay. He had heard that there was a grand beach for young people to play upon. I believe he forgot that they were getting above the attractions of sand-pies and the charms of wading barefoot in the rising tide. He will continue to call them children right to the end of the chapter, and I doubt whether he will ever learn to regard their proper pursuits as anything but infantile. I have known him bring home a child's story book as a present for one of his sons who was glorying in a shy and struggling crop of whiskers.

We liked Bridlington very much, and went several times. It was a long journey for us from Bettenham, and as my husband always remarked, it was a far longer one back. We always paid one or two visits to Flamborough Head, and these were among the pleasantest parts of our holidays. Once we walked both there and back, but I found the distance too great, and preferred to ride afterwards. The boys preferred to walk. Samson, especially, treated the idea of a conveyance with scorn.

One part of our programme was to go as far as the North Sea Landing, and take a boat there, to visit the caves. There was one which the boys called the

dining-hall, for we usually took luncheon in it. There was often a heavy sea at the Landing, and it was as much as two men could do to pull us round the heads. Then was the time that Samson was in his glory; his strong muscles were brought into play, and he showed the hardy fishermen that he could handle an oar.

The last time we were at Flamborough was nearly proving a terrible day for all of us. Some of our party had walked from Bridlington, and the others had driven. We had fondly hoped that all our family would meet together during that visit to the sea-side, but George and Ellis had been unable to come. Nobody had expressed greater sorrow than Samson, for he was sincerely devoted to all our children. He was almost seventeen at the time, and had grown into a strong and handsome young man. He was taller and stouter than either Talbot or Charles, though they were both older than he. Talbot had left Clayton for good, and was going to study analytical chemistry, as that seemed to be his favourite pursuit. We had hoped he would go to Cambridge like his brothers, and for a time he had lived at Monton with Neville Ross; but the scheme had been given up, as Neville thought it best that Talbot should be allowed to follow the inclination of his mind, and analyze other things

rather than words and sentences or abstract propositions. Charles was still at Clayton, and was intending to go to Cambridge with Samson; but Neville Ross was to have them both with him first.

Neville was still a bachelor, and said he should not think of marrying until all our boys were settled in life. When I told him that he would be better able to receive them and attend to them if he had a wife, he only laughed, and declared that he was one of the self-willed sort who must be allowed to go on in his own way. He had been with us at Bridlington, but had gone home again. He made all kinds of excuses about pressure of business at Monton, but my own opinion is that he wanted to be back for a cricket match which was to be played between the club of his parish and that at Foxley. His side won, and he had most to do with the result. Samson knew what was coming off, for I heard him say,—

"I am sorry that I cannot come with you, and give you a bit of help, but next summer it will be different. Two promising young strangers whom I know will be parishioners of yours then, and I dare say they will be good enough to find a place in the eleven." Then he looked at Charles, and the two laughed together.

Charles and Samson were always together in those days. Gertrude and Ethel were often with them. I sometimes wondered what the end of it would be. My own desire was that they should all grow up together as brothers and sisters; but it was impossible to say or do anything in the matter. I did not feel that I could say to them, "Now you young people must not fall in love with each other. You are to be brothers and sisters, and nothing more, as long as you live." If I said anything about the subject to my husband, he gave me a look which was most aggravating, and then made some remark or other about the folly of finding mares'-nests.

But I have rambled a long way from the day at Flamborough, and yet everything connected with that visit is printed indelibly upon my memory. We, that is my husband and myself, with Gertrude and Ethel, had driven out in the morning. Samson had jokingly proposed that we should take Talbot with us, and the girls should walk with him and Charles.

"Talbot will be lost as sure as anything," said Samson. "He goes wandering away in search of snails and flies, or he goes knocking at the cliffs and asking whether any fossils are at home, or whether they have all become analytical chemists. Think of

two strong-limbed mortals, who never cared twopence for all the fossils in Christendom, having to loiter and wait while a curious brother settles his little doubts and starts new speculations by the dozen."

This was the manner in which Samson often joked about Talbot's fondness for natural history and geology. The girls might have walked to Flamborough, and they would have gathered wild-flowers by the way, and Samson would not have been so impatient. But the sky was rather dull, and I was afraid of a storm, so we went as I have said. Talbot was left behind as usual, and came to the Head long after his companions had reached it. Then we proceeded to the Landing, took a boat, and went to the cave for luncheon. The tide had begun to go out before we returned, and it was a hard pull to get the boat in again.

As the tide receded, we walked along the shore and examined other caves. Then we elders sat on the rocks, while the young people proceeded with their explorations. How long they had been gone I cannot tell, for I was watching the distant vessels going north and south, when I heard a scream in the direction which our party had taken. There were a

number of visitors about, but I felt at once that something had happened to one of our children. I did not pause to distinguish between our own offspring and those who had been committed to our care. The images of the bright and healthy youths and maidens who had lately left us came with terrible suggestiveness before my mind. Ethel, Gertrude, Talbot, Samson, Charles—had one of these been smitten down? I fancied I saw pieces of rock loosed from the sea-worn cliff, and rushing with cruel precision upon one or more of those who were as dear to me as my own heart's blood.

"There is something wrong," said my husband, leaping to his feet, and casting away the book which he was reading. I never see that book without living over again the moments of agony which I spent at Flamborough.

"Do not leave me here; I must go too!" I exclaimed, as my husband was hastening away as well as he could over the rough and slippery ground. He did not speak a word, but took me by the hand and helped me forward. My boots were not fitted for the task, and I knew that they were being torn and my feet were being bruised. Fortunately we had not very far to go; for we soon saw a dozen people

clustered together. When we reached the spot, we saw our dear Gertrude lying like one of the dead. Samson was holding her head, and I could see that his hands were covered with blood. A babel of sounds was in the air, but I could only distinguish the word "brandy." Samson was holding something to Gertrude's lips, and I could see that it was the cup of a pocket-flask.

"What is that, Samson?" asked my husband in a voice which I never heard in my life, except once or twice when he has been preaching or lecturing.

"Brandy, I think, sir, or something to bring her round," replied Samson in a strange and nervous tone.

"Take that brandy from her lips! These strangers know no better, but you ought to know that we never take brandy for anything."

Samson looked up, and I could see anger in his eye, and I thought he was about to say something which would distress my husband, and which he himself would afterwards be sorry for; but he passed the cup to some one near, and said,—

"Well, what must we do? shall I carry her away?"

But the colour came back into Gertrude's face, and she opened her eyes, and looked round at the people who were gathered there.

She was soon sufficiently recovered to be moved

into the village of Flamborough, but not before we had learned what a narrow escape she had experienced. Talbot had been the unconscious cause of the accident. He had climbed some distance up the cliff, and in doing so had loosed a piece of rock which had been gradually undermined by the dashing of the waves. Gertrude was seated near a small pool, and would have been crushed by the falling mass, if Samson had not seen the danger and quickly thrown her aside. Before he could recover himself he had fallen among the stones, and several fragments which had been dislodged came down upon his outstretched hands.

When I saw how narrow had been the escape, and when I remembered whose quickness and strength had saved my Gertie from an awful death, I thanked God that it had been our lot to take the orphan children when they seemed friendless in the world. We had given our thought and affection to the fatherless, and one of them had plucked our child from the very jaws of the grave.

Talbot was more concerned than any of us. He wanted to give a number of reasons why the piece of rock ought not to have fallen. According to him all the probabilities were against the chance; but Samson said to him,—

"If you had felt the stones cutting your fingers to the bone, as I did, you would not have troubled your head about probabilities; the actualities would have been quite enough for you."

Samson soon laughed about the whole affair. He referred once to the brandy in a half-apologetic way:—

"If anybody had passed a cup of turpentine or paint, and said it was good for people in a fit, I should have been ready to give it to Gertrude, I was so much frightened."

My husband replied,—

"Brandy seems to be an article of faith with people, and I felt as if everything was upside down when I saw you offering brandy to my little girl."

He always called her his "little girl," or his "pet lamb," or something of the kind.

This conversation took place at Bridlington, when we had returned to our lodgings. We all drove back that day, and Samson went to see the doctor about his hands, which were stiff and swollen. Nothing serious was wrong with them, but as he sat with them both bandaged he looked quite an invalid.

He had not finished about the brandy, and I could see that he thought my husband had been too strict about the matter. He continued,—

"Everybody said 'brandy, brandy, brandy,' when

they saw what had happened. To my mind it would have been as reasonable to ask for a Dutch cheese or a barrel-organ. Still I have heard somebody say that you may safely ask for brandy in any corner of the universe, for you are sure to have a response. I know that stout gentleman who handed me the cup of his flask was by my side immediately, as if to prove the truth of what sounds like an exaggerated saying. Do you not think in a case like that it would be justifiable to use brandy?"

My husband replied that Gertrude had recovered quickly without it, though doubtless if she had taken only a drop or two the recovery would have been ascribed to that. "This is how the matter stands, Samson: our country is cursed beyond men's knowledge with excessive drinking; and the stages by which people approach excess are so gradual that the difference between what is called moderation and what is really immoderation cannot be marked with certainty. It has been my fate all my life to come in contact with people who have held themselves forward as proofs that men can drink what is good for them and no more; and yet those very men are examples that people are not to be trusted in their opinions on this subject. From time to time one and another

become unmistakable drunkards; and some who do not deserve that name, systematically take more than is good for them. I have heard a man argue on behalf of strict moderation when he has not been quite sober. Now these people are not hypocrites, but they believe what they say. Does not that show what a dangerous thing drink is, and how mistaken we may be in our ideas about moderation? I know no case in which drink is necessary, and I know no case in which it is perfectly safe. A man may drink and never become a drunkard; that depends more upon the accidents of physical constitution than on anything else. Some people have an hereditary tendency towards drunkenness; if they drink, they are almost sure to become drunkards. Surrounded as we are by dangers, and possessing a safeguard which is infallible—for the abstainer cannot possibly drink too much—I think every principle of prudence points to abstinence as the right course."

Nothing more was said about the subject at that time. I thought once my husband was intending to say something about the special dangers of the Naresboroughs, but he refrained. I noticed from the day of the accident that a greater fondness seemed to spring up between Samson and Gertrude. That

moment of peril, and the quick, brave deliverance, had brought the young people nearer than they had been before. My husband, who had a microscopic eye for some affairs, would not hear me upon this subject. How true it is that nobody can see everything.

That was our last visit to Bridlington or Flamborough. We did not make up our minds to go no more, but each year we went somewhere else.

Samson and Charles went to Neville Ross, to prepare for Cambridge. Talbot was away in London, and our house became very quiet. Only Gertrude and Ethel were there, and they had reached young womanhood. Beautiful they both were, and good as beautiful.

When Samson went to Cambridge, my husband thought it was time to give him his father's paper; but I used my influence to dissuade him. The way in which I looked at it was this:—

"Samson will never drink without first informing you of his intention to do so. He is the soul of honour, and would lose his life rather than break his word. I believe he will never think of giving up his present habits of sobriety. If he should do so, you would be compelled to put in his hand the paper which his father left him. But I think you would have to give it to Ethel also, and I am sure she is in

no danger. It is a dark and painful confession, and would cloud the young people's life."

My husband was willing enough to be persuaded. He was not one of those disagreeable people who are eager to tell bad news. His only fear was that silence too long continued might prove at last a curse instead of a blessing. Neville Ross took the same view as I did. He did not believe there was any danger to be apprehended. He was proud of his pupils, and prophesied for them a noble career. He said Charles would shine in the schools and Samson in the fields. I am not sure that he did not put it in the reverse order; but whether he did or not, I must give the schools in preference to the fields.

We lived our happy contented life at Bettenham, thinking of our young men who were making their way in the world, when one day a letter came from Samson which upset all our thoughts. It was to my husband, and I could see at breakfast time that it troubled him very much; but he put it in his pocket and said nothing about it.

As he left the breakfast-room I could see that he wanted me to join him in the study. I went there, and found him with a look of despair on his face.

"What is it, dear?" I asked.

He gave me the letter from Samson. It was full of love and tenderness, but it contained the announcement that he had decided to take wine with the other young men, as his abstinence made him look singular; and though he hated drunkenness as much as anybody, yet he did not think there was any danger of his overstepping the limits of the strictest propriety and soberness.

"I thank you," said Samson, "that you did not bind me by any special promise not to drink, though I did sign some sort of pledge when I was a boy. I shall not change my ways to any great extent; of that you may be sure."

He had signed the temperance pledge like all our children, but it was evident that he did not look upon that as specially binding. It was Wednesday when this letter came, and Samson said that on the following Monday he should be at a wine party, and in strict moderation should join his fellows with the glass.

"What will you do?" I asked.

"I must go to Cambridge to-morrow. I shall tell him how the matter stands, and give him his father's paper; and then he must decide for himself. I wonder what the end will be."

I think I never saw my husband more troubled

about anything. I had my own share of the anxiety too. Humphrey and Kemp Naresborough, and the previous generations of that ill-fated family, came before my mind. Was the boy, over whom I had watched with all a mother's care, to follow them in the horrid road they had taken? And I could not forget my own Gertrude. That she and Samson loved each other with more than a brotherly and sisterly love, I knew. What did this new departure mean to her?

My husband wrote to Cambridge announcing his visit for the following day. It would be late on Thursday night, he said, before he reached his destination, as he purposed to go by way of London.

He started early on Thursday, that he might get the train at Chester. The girls could not understand the reason for this visit, and we did not tell them. They sent their love to Charles and Samson, and many kind messages besides.

I felt very sad when my husband was gone. If I could have talked to anybody, it would have been a relief; but that privilege was denied me. I knew that a crisis was at hand, and in a few days it would be seen whether Samson Naresborough would surround himself with an impenetrable safeguard against the hereditary foe of his family, or would deliberately

become its victim. Of all my prayers during those anxious days, my soul went most into those I offered at the throne of grace for Samson Naresborough, that he might be kept from evil.

Neville Ross came over and stayed a few days with us. My husband had telegraphed to him from Chester; and though he had not mentioned the business which was taking him to Cambridge, yet the telegram was sufficiently explicit to show that the boys were the occasion. Neville thought it must be sickness, and yet he could not understand why I was not gone too. I soon explained matters, and then I felt my heart lightened. I said,—

"My husband must have known how much the secret would torment me, so he asked you to come that we might be able to share it. Yesterday was the longest, dreariest day I ever experienced. The girls know there is something wrong, and I must not tell them what. I am afraid they think either Charles or Samson is in trouble, and they are conjecturing all kinds of pains and penalties which the culprit may have to suffer."

"Samson is going rather deliberately to work," said Neville thoughtfully. "I am glad he did not begin drinking first, and then send word that he had

made up his mind to do so. As things are, the whole case is within the region of argument; and my dear friend the vicar is the toughest opponent whom Samson could possibly find in the country. I suppose Mr. Fenwick has taken Humphrey Naresborough's paper with him."

"Yes," I replied; "the secret must be told at last. But I am not sure that it matters. Samson must have been told everything soon, and a few months more or less cannot make any difference. Tell me, what do you think will be the result of all this?"

I was thinking not only about Samson, but about Ethel and Gertrude. I know many would laugh at my fears and call them superstitious; but I seemed to have the impression that if anybody situated like Samson drank at all, he would sooner or later become a drunkard. I expressed this fear to Neville Ross, though I did not care to tell him all the anxieties which I felt on the subject. Like all people whose advice is worth anything, Neville seemed unwilling to put forward his opinion.

"There are so many things in this world which must be waited for," he said, "that it is often the greatest of pities to anticipate what time will bring forth. We can only justify ourselves in doing so if

we must make some exertions to help forward the right or to keep back the wrong. Mere guessing is often the child of prejudice, and often its offspring."

Then Neville laughed, and continued in another kind of voice, "What a habit one gets of preaching, both in season and out of it. But the fact is, that I scarcely know what to say. I could easily manufacture an opinion which would serve to lessen your doubt; but it might prove a mistaken opinion, and then your sorrow would be all the greater."

"Tell me what you think," I pleaded. "You know Samson better than we do."

"I believe I do," replied Neville. "I am of your opinion, that if Samson should begin to drink, he would sooner or later follow the Naresborough way to destruction. But I believe that this crisis in his affairs will turn the right way. I fully expect Mr. Fenwick to come back the victor; and strange to say, his adversary will be still more the victor."

I looked bewildered, I suppose, for Neville explained himself:—

"The simple truth is, that Samson is not the adversary whom the vicar has gone to meet. Drink is the foe; and if the vicar triumphs, Samson will have triumphed too, and that will be a victory indeed!"

PART V.

My Battle of Life.

By Samson Naresborough.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRIENDS OF MY BOYHOOD.

I ALWAYS feel like a man away from home. It seems to me that Bettenham is my native place, and yet, I suppose, I was born, like my fathers before me, at Naresborough Fold. I have been fortunate in many things; but there is nothing for which I thank God so much as that he caused me to be trained at the vicarage there. I am afraid I was a headstrong boy; and like all headstrong people, I did not think enough about the feelings of others. I must have taken a very narrow view of things; for I remember quite well that my own way was right in my own eyes, though I know now that it was often wrong. I did not pay sufficient attention to what Mr. Fenwick was continually saying about the cultivated conscience. He used one illustration which has remained with me ever since. He spoke about chronometers, by means

of which sailors can find their longitude at sea, and he said the chronometers must be tested and corrected by the never-varying heavens; so we must test and correct our ideas of right and wrong by the revealed will of God. If I had taken to heart his patient lessons it would have been better for me. I am glad he is still living to see that his care and love were not quite thrown away.

It is not because I am unmindful of Mrs. Fenwick's more than motherly love and devotion that I mention her husband first. She will never know how much she is to me. I could not tell her half the whole, and she would not let me try.

I sometimes think it is possible to be more grateful for others than for ourselves. I must keep this before my eyes when I say what I feel about the kindness of all the Fenwicks to my sister Ethel. I was always a strong boy, with, I think, my full share of backbone. Perhaps a little hardship would have done me good. But it is different with a girl. Ethel was always motherly, and in suffering and adversity she would have found some other sufferer to help, but she would have felt pain and sorrow a thousand times more than I should. Thank God, the occasion never arose. She was sheltered from the stormy blast.

I never knew very much about George or Ellis, but they were both fine fellows. George went into his uncle's bank, and did very well there. Ellis was a lecturer at Cambridge when I was there, but not of my college. He is a fine scholar, and has deserved all the honours which have since been conferred upon him.

I can remember Lillian quite well; "sweet Lillian," as she is always called. I like the idea of continuing pet names when those whom we call by them are dead. Lillian would have been a woman now if she had lived; but I shall think of her always as the tender sufferer who won all our hearts by her gentle, loving ways. I know she suffers no longer, but that picture of the past remains, and will do while I live.

Talbot and Charles and Gertie were my playfellows. Talbot was three years older than I, and what a man I thought him! He knew more about birds and flowers and insects than any boy I ever met. But Charles and I were bosom friends from the first. We never quarrelled once; but there can be only one reason for that—he was the most forbearing fellow in the world. He was a year older than I, and yet he acted as if he were the younger and I ever so much his senior. He has been the same all through. Sometimes he says the reason why

he gave way to me was, that his weaker nature leaned upon my stronger one. He always laughs when he says it. No greater mistake could be made than to imagine that Charles Fenwick was weak. Quietness may be mistaken for weakness, but it is often a very different thing.

If I followed my impulses, I should write more about Gertie than I have written about all the others. But there are circumstances under which the will may be taken for the deed. Gertie herself says that in this case the will is far better than the deed could ever be; so I must say no more.

Gertie was asking me not long ago about my feelings in early life; she wanted to know whether I felt like an orphan. Well, I cannot say that I did. I soon began to have a dim consciousness that Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick were not really my father and mother, but the fact did not grieve me. How could it, when they did everything possible to make the home at the vicarage everything a reasonable heart could wish for, and when I had not known my own parents?

Mr. Fenwick has told me since, that he sometimes blamed himself for not talking to Ethel and me about our father and mother. I think it was best to do as he did. We were scarcely conscious of our loss, and

it would have benefited nobody to have filled us with vain regrets.

Since I decided to write this account of myself, I have been trying to find out what my attitude was in my boyhood in reference to the drink question. We were not kept in ignorance about it, as we might have been. Of course, we could not help seeing the "Cheshire Cheese" and the "Soldier Laddie" at Bettenham; but we should have looked upon them as something outside our lines, and should have ignored them accordingly.

I was an impatient boy, and under ordinary circumstances I was inclined to resent the idea of other people picking and choosing my way for me. I can remember that I was sometimes impatient with Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick because of what they said about drink. This must have been after I went to school; it is scarcely possible that I felt in that way before. But I cannot say; I seem to have been a born oppositionist. As I grew older I disguised my tendency, under the pretence that justice must be done all round, and that it is as bad to err on one side as on the other. I did not look deeper into things, and perceive that though it may be quite easy to err in one direction, it may be almost impossible to err in the opposite one. I can see now that drink is full of the possibilities of

error, and that the dangers in drink belong to the drink; but it is not so with abstinence. An abstainer may do wrong; but the wrong is not in the abstinence, but is independent of it and apart from it.

I remember a conversation between Mr. Fenwick and me on this very subject; for he was wonderfully patient. I am surprised that he did not box my ears sometimes, instead of reasoning with me, as he was always ready to do.

I said to him not long ago, "Do you not think you were too indulgent—not with Ethel, for she deserved all that could be done for her, and she appreciated it—but do you not think you were too indulgent with her obstinate brother?"

"Perhaps I was, Samson," he replied, smiling; "but as things have turned out I cannot find in my heart to be very sorry. I have often said that parents substitute stringent rules and violent behaviour for good counsel and example. I have always had great faith in the absolutely right; and though I should be the last man in the world to imply for a moment that I have reached what was absolutely right, yet I can and must say that I have humbly and constantly striven after it. In my training of you I only carried out what I thought was my duty, and your mother was always helping me."

We called Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick father and mother in early life. When we learned the truth about our own parents, Ethel and I sometimes made a distinction in speaking to or of our foster-parents; but the attempt was scarcely successful, so that a little confusion crept into our language, but there was no confusion in our hearts.

But I was referring to the argument which I had with Mr. Fenwick about what he called the difference between the dangers of drink and the dangers in abstinence. It was Christmas time, and we had some frost. We went every day as far as to Bybout Mere, to see whether the ice was strong enough for skating. The Mere was really a mill-pond, but I never heard anybody call it by that name. Even the miller called it the Mere. Mr. Fenwick went with us, for he knew we were a venturesome lot, and if we had been left to our own judgment we should have gone on the ice long before it was fit. There were a few days' keen frost, about a week after Christmas, and then we were all right, if we kept away from the end where the mill was. It was never safe to trust the ice there. There were a lot of skaters, and some of them were very reckless. Two young men from beyond Bybout managed to quarrel, and they skated at each

other: one of them came out of the contest with a broken leg, and the other was severely injured. We were all concerned about the accident, and it formed a part of our conversation for some time.

This incident was made use of by Mr. Fenwick to show me the absurdity of my opinions; though let me say, in justice to him, that he did not call them absurd. But he was showing the difference between the dangers which belong to the drink and those which may be found in any habit of life. He said,—

"You remember how we waited for the ice to form at Bybout Mere?"

That was how he began illustrations; and in spite of my thoughtlessness, I had an uneasy sense of what was coming, though I could not have told what it was.

"We waited for the ice to form, that it might be strong enough for skating. Why did we wait? Because it would be dangerous to go on it sooner." Then he paused. He was always willing to answer his own questions, but he would always wait long enough to give you time to say that you did not accept his answer, and could not hold yourself responsible for it. I said nothing. Then he proceeded: "If we had gone upon the ice before it was strong, we should have done a thing which was dangerous in

itself. But when the ice was safe we went upon it, and were annoyed by two young fellows who had drunk too freely, and who quarrelled. They made it to some extent dangerous to be on the ice; but the danger which they created was not owing to the ice being strong. They hurt themselves, one of them hurt himself very seriously, but he could not blame the ice. Nobody could blame the ice. It is very much the same with respect to drink. The drink itself is a danger, and I recommend people to abstain from it because it is dangerous. Suppose they follow my advice, and leave drink alone, I do not say they will be removed from danger altogether, but I say that the abstinence is not a danger any more than strong ice is. We may come to trouble, and have misfortunes, though we are abstainers, but the trouble and misfortune are not part of the abstinence."

There was one thing about Mr. Fenwick which was very nice: he did not ask you after each of his arguments whether you were not convinced. Questions like that lead to some embarrassment and some insincerity. Mr. Fenwick lived the good man's life, and spoke the wise man's words, and did not ask too many questions.

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL-FELLOWS.

I HAVE read somewhere that in times of religious persecution there were no martyrs who went to the stake more readily than the boys and girls. I can understand this. What a boy fears is not oppression but ridicule. Perhaps some boys are proof even against that, but I was not so constituted. I liked to be popular with my fellows, and was impatient about anything which seemed to put me at a disadvantage with them. I have a warm place in my heart for dear old Clayton, but I must confess that I spent some miserable days there. There was no actual bullying, but it is always possible to inflict petty annoyances where a number of boys live together as we did. Talbot and Charles did not seem to suffer as much from the disparaging remarks which were made about our teetotalism as I did. They believed thor-

oughly in their principles, whereas at the best I was a Laodicean. We were called Rechabites, and the Sons of Jonadab, and other names, which we ought really to have been proud of, but which were bitter as gall to me.

But my life had its compensations. Field sports are the greatest events in the world in the estimation of many boys, and we at Clayton were like other boys in this respect. It ought to have satisfied me to have excelled in them, as I certainly did, and it ought to have silenced my detractors; but whatever else may be said about boys, I think it is no libel to declare that they are not logical, and they do not give up a prejudice when the evidence is manifestly against them.

Scholarship was not my forte, though nobody has been able to call me a dunce. Cricket was my delight, and I soon won my way into the school eleven, and before I left I was captain of the team. It is disloyalty to say much against a boy who has won his blue, and it is high treason to revile the captain of the eleven; so before I left Clayton I ceased to feel the bitterness which had been my lot at first. Strange to say, however, I was no more reconciled to total abstinence in my ease and honour than I had been in my discomfort.

A great deal has been written and sung which makes an impression on the mind favourable to drinking. A great number of the books which I read were full of references to conviviality. Some of the authors who were favourites with us were always sounding the praises of "the flowing bowl." This is a source of danger which does not receive the attention which it deserves. Sports especially have been associated with excessive drinking, and yet everybody knows that nothing is so fatal to a cricketer, or to any one engaged in athletic pursuits, as that same vaunted alcohol. Every cricket club ought to be a kind of temperance society; but I am sorry to say that the opposite is usually the case, and that pastimes are often spoiled by drunken surroundings.

Every boy who is worth anything has his chums at school. But until I began to force my way forward in the cricket-field I was left to the companionship of Talbot and Charles. Talbot cared for nobody's frown or favour. He had his own pursuits, and they were sufficient for him. Then, he was prepared to argue any question at issue, and the more opponents he had the better he liked it. Charles took things as they came. He was quite content to have his brother and me. I think I may say that as long as he had me

for a friend he was satisfied. Talbot was not much of a companion to him—not from want of heart, but want of thought. So Charles and myself were as much together at first as we had been at Bettenham. Fortunately Charles had a fondness for games, and he did very well at cricket, and thus we widened our circle of friends together. I am thankful to remember that success and popularity never tempted me to neglect my early companions. It must be a miserable thing for a man to look back upon his early life and find his conscience upbraiding him for meanness or ingratitude.

There were boys at Clayton who were not very desirable companions; but I am sorry to say they were not shunned as they ought to have been. Batten was very mischievous in the influence which he exerted. He was a big, strong fellow, and had more money at his disposal than any of us. Some people say that boys are not influenced by the social position of their schoolfellows. In a sense this is true, but it is not all the truth. A very clever boy could win his way forward in the school through his cleverness, even though he were known to be comparatively poor; for there was nobody at Clayton who was absolutely poor. But it would require more cleverness in the son of a man

who could not afford to allow his boy much money, than in the son of a man who could, and did, give with an open hand. I know now that Mr. Fenwick might have made a far more liberal allowance to me than he did, but he was wise enough to treat me in this respect as he treated his own sons. Our position was an average one in the school. There were boys better off, and there were boys, and many of them, who were worse off. What was true with respect to cleverness in class was also true in the cricket-field and among the games generally. A fellow would never find his way into the eleven because he happened to have a deep purse; but other things being equal, the purse would turn the scale in his favour. One thing happens in all the cricket clubs which I have had anything to do with. Five or six men or boys can unmistakably prove their right to be in the best eleven, but after them there will come a dozen players who seem to have equal claims to the other places. Personal preference, rather than undoubted ability, will decide the choice which is made, and the rich middling player will stand a better chance than the poor one.

Batten was not a great player, but he was in the eleven when I was. If I had been captain at that time, I should not have chosen him. He was a very

fast bowler, but his balls were not straight; and he was a very free bat, but he hit away at almost everything;—the consequence was, that when the bowling opposed to us happened to be very good, Batten was pretty sure to be out for nothing or for very few runs.

Perhaps I was prejudiced against him, and it is quite possible that I cannot look upon him yet with impartial eyes; for he was always the ringleader of those who scoffed at us and our teetotalism. I think it was he who invented the title, "Three Hebrew Children" for us. Talbot was Shadrach, Charles was Meshach, and of course I was Abed-nego. But we had so many names that none of them stuck to us. Perhaps Eugene Aram stuck to me longer than any, and I was indebted to Batten for that favour also.

He was a big, coarse fellow, with black bushy hair. Some of the younger boys spoke of him in a voice which was almost awe-struck; and they whispered among themselves that he knew more things which are not supposed to be learned at school than any of the masters could teach him. This is quite possible, and I am not sorry that I was never familiar enough with him to be taken into his confidence.

Cadman was a very different kind of boy. He was certainly the wit of the school. We are some-

times told that wits are naturally disagreeable. If there is such a rule, which I myself doubt, then Cadman was an exception to it. A kinder boy never lived. Batten said, "Wicket-keeping makes Cadman so sharp. If you were to put him in the out-field, where he would have a long sight of the ball before he had to handle it, he would have no more wit in him than Shadrach there."

Shadrach, of course, was Talbot, who was a standing butt of Batten and the fellows who were most intimate with him. I do not say that Talbot was wittier than other people; he was too busy trying to find out the truth of things to spend his time and strength on repartee; so he did not come off very well in his contests with Batten, who had a ready stock of puns, not very choice ones, some of them, which he was always ready to use in the place of arguments.

Cadman was clever all round—he was a good scholar, and was also the best boy wicket-keeper I ever saw in my life. If Cadman had not been there, I think the wicket-keeping would have fallen to my share; as it was, I used to long-stop, and this was no easy task when Batten was bowling. His balls came any way. I had my own credit to think about, and

the good of my side, or I should have let his balls go past to the boundary. He was not fit to bowl; and yet because Cadman and I did twice as much work as ought to have fallen to our share, and because we did it well—I may say that without being charged with boasting—Batten kept some better fellow out of the eleven.

Some of the boys said Batten had been drunk many a time; and this was not told with disgust, but with wondering admiration. I do not know that any of them wanted to be drunk; perhaps if the thing had been proposed to them they would have shrunk from it, but they did not fail to count it among the signs of heroism in a school-fellow.

Cadman never seemed to dislike Batten. I am not aware that he disliked anybody. He might seem to speak about some fellows with good-natured contempt, but I do not think his antipathy ever went further than that. He was one of the few boys who ever talked seriously about total abstinence. He was not a teetotaler himself, but in our conversations he spoke far more favourably about it than I did.

"What does it matter?" he said. "You do not care about beer or wine or anything of that sort, and you say your people at home are dead against it. If

I were in your place I should go on in my own way, and take no notice of anybody. If I wanted to wear a red waistcoat, and I thought it would please my father, I should come out strong in red waistcoats from this time forth. But the simple fact is that everything is the other way with me. Let us suppose that you made a convert of me to your views, if they are your views, though you are about as clever at teetotalism as Batten is at bowling, and that is not saying very much in your favour; but suppose Talbot or Charles made a convert of me to their views, I should do something very disagreeable, for a drink of beer winds up a cricket match like hip-hip-hurrah. Then I am sure my people would say the long-expected crisis had arrived at last; for they have always prophesied that I should become so sharp that I might at any moment cut myself adrift from all my senses. So my case is not like yours. Stick to your side, that is what I say. There are not many of you at Clayton, that is true; but remember, if bright and shining lights like myself are on the other side, there are also such questionable luminaries as Victor Batten."

When Cadman called Batten by his full name he was sure to laugh, and this time I laughed too, for I did not know what to say.

CHAPTER III.

A DOCTOR'S TRICK.

It is not my intention to give an account of my life at Clayton. I daresay any school-boy's experiences would be interesting if they were faithfully recorded; for a school is a little world, and the varieties of human nature seen there are as striking as those seen anywhere else. There were some town boys among us; they were on the Clayton Foundation, and were generally called "Foundations." Dr. Stone had four sons, who of course were called the "Foundation Stones." Dr. Stone was the medical man who attended us at Clayton; and Bertie, his eldest son, was intended for his father's profession. What the other three boys were intended for, nobody knew. They were very dull. Bertie was sharp enough at anything but books, and was captain of the Foundation cricketers. When we played outsiders we played all

together, but among ourselves we distinguished between the "Foundations" and the "Houses."

It was through Bertie Stone that I discovered a trick which his father played upon me. I cannot help calling it a trick, though, I daresay, many people would think it perfectly fair. I took a chill one night after a football match, and next day I felt very unwell. Dr. Stone was sent for, and he had me removed into the blue-room, as we called one of the dormitories, the walls of which were coloured blue. This was the sick ward, as the Foundations called it. My illness was not serious, but for a few weeks I was not allowed to take part in the games. Mr. Fenwick had given strict orders that none of his boys were to be expected to take intoxicating drink, under any circumstances. Dr. Stone had objected to this interference with his prerogatives when George and Ellis were at Clayton. But Mr. Fenwick was firm, and he said that if there was supposed to be need to prescribe alcoholic drinks, he must be communicated with at once.

I took a fair amount of medicine while I was ill, and continued to take it until I had quite recovered. Fortunately, I knew scarcely anything about medicine, as I could not remember an illness before. This

medicine I did not dislike at all; but when the fellows came to see me, as they did when the doctor said there was no fear of infection, I told them that medicine was very nice, and the only inconvenience about sickness was being unable to go into the fields.

The last time the doctor saw me in the blue-room he said,—

"Well, Naresborough, I think you are all right now. I knew that medicine would put you on your feet; you had allowed yourself to run down a bit, and needed a tonic, that was all."

He was a tall, loosely made man, with a red face and pouting lips. I never liked him, but thanked him for his care of me.

I fancied he was making fun of me, as there was a peculiar expression on his face. I had felt very unwell, it is true, when first I took the chill, but it was not my fault that I had been taken to the blue-room, and it seemed rather hard that the doctor should act as if I had been shamming. Still, as he had said nothing, I could not find an excuse to defend myself. I believe now that I mistook him altogether. It is probable that he thought I had been worse than really was the case, and he had embraced the opportunity to carry out a pet scheme; for the medicine which I had

taken was nothing but sherry, which had come to me in a medicine bottle, and had been taken by table-spoonfuls in the orthodox fashion. There were people even at that time who called Dr. Stone a brewer's doctor, so fond was he of ordering beer or porter or wine to his patients. In my case I do not think he had any mischievous intention, except so far as it was crafty and mean for him to do by stealth what he could not do openly. I daresay he thought that my abstinence was the cause of my taking cold, and that his sherry restored me to health. I can only come to the conclusion that men like him care nothing for evidence; for myself and the Fenwicks were singularly well while we were at Clayton, and many of the boys were under his care continually. He had formed the opinion that alcohol is essential to human well-being, and he stuck to his idea in spite of all contrary proofs.

I have said that it was through Bertie I discovered what kind of medicine I had been taking. He was one of those who strove to keep in favour with Batten, and in a moment of confidence he told what treatment his father had pursued with me. I did not always make a secret of the fact that I was anything but an ardent teetotaler; and Batten was pleased to assume that I had known all about the

sherry, and that I had prolonged my invalid's career for the purpose of enjoying the medicine! What he said was quickly repeated to me; for at school, as elsewhere, there is no want of messengers who are ready to tell us about remarks which they hear to our disparagement. At first I set it down as an invention of Batten's. I had frequently heard some of his stories about people who were teetotalers, but who drank more than their share. He was guilty of an inconsistency which was common at that time, whatever it may be now: with one breath he said teetotalers drank on the sly, and then he ascribed to them all kinds of disadvantages as the result of their abstinence! I heard Talbot point out this contradiction more than once. Talbot was sometimes called Socrates; and when he showed the absurdity of some argument it was thought sufficient to call him Socrates, and turn to another subject.

Bertie Stone became afraid of what he had done, when he discovered that his secret communication had been repeated, and was a subject of open comment among the boys. If he had not come to me about it, I should have paid no attention to the rumour, and it would have died out.

I was at Stilton's shop, looking at a fresh lot of

cricket bats which had come in, when Bertie saw me and came in also. He examined the bats too, and joined in the conversation; but I noticed that he seemed ill-at-ease. He left the shop with me, and I strolled up the street towards the school.

"Naresborough," he said, taking hold of my arm, "if you say anything about what Batten has told the fellows, I shall get into no end of a scrape."

At first I did not understand what he was referring to, so I said, "Batten has so many things to tell the fellows, and they matter so very little to me, that I am not likely to trouble my head about them."

"That's right," he replied, with a relieved expression; "it does not matter, but if the governor knew that I had told, he would be ready to kill me. At least I know I should have a bad time of it. Take no notice of it, and the fellows will soon have something else to occupy their minds, which are not mines of wealth," he said, laughing uneasily.

I knew that "governor" was the name by which he honoured his father, unless time was short with him, and then he simply said "gov." It flashed upon me in a moment that he was referring to Batten's tale about the medicine.

"Do you mean to say," I asked, releasing myself from him, "that you set that nonsense going?"

"Hush," he replied, looking round, "there is no need to tell everybody in Clayton about it. If the governor found out that I had told, he would never forgive me. He is more particular about what he calls 'professional secrecy' than anything. I told that cad Batten, and he went and split."

In spite of my anger I could not help smiling to hear Stone calling Batten a cad. I thought of the magnificent Victor, and remembered how sedulously Bertie had curried favour with him. I could not help saying, "Batten will be delighted to hear that he is considered a cad by one of his former followers." I was nearly saying toadies, but Stone seemed so oppressed with conflicting fears that I refrained.

I would give no promise not to inform Mr. Fenwick of what had been done, and for some time Bertie Stone was wonderfully civil in his behaviour to me. I told Talbot and Charles what had passed between us. They, like myself, had looked upon the story as an invention of Batten's, and were annoyed at what had been done. It is a point of school-boy honour not to tell things of each other; and this was the reason why Mr. Fenwick was not informed of the

measures which Dr. Stone had taken to restore my health, and at the same time ride his favourite hobby.

Charles was most shocked at what seemed to him the doctor's duplicity. But Talbot looked at both sides of the question, as was customary with him.

"There is this to be said about it," he remarked, in his judicial way, "teetotalers object to the indiscriminate ordering of drink by doctors; and they say, if drink is to be given, let it be put in an ordinary bottle like anything else, and let the patient take it as he would take other physic, without knowing what it is. I could show you books in which those very words are used."

"Father never said that, I think," replied Charles. "I have heard him say that drink is not necessary as either food or medicine. If doctors feel that they must give people wine by hook or crook, they might keep the fact to themselves."

Talbot agreed with that, but thought nothing could be done without implicating Bertie; and though none of us liked him, yet we were not prepared to bring him into trouble.

I suppose it would be absurd for me to pretend that the wine which I took under Dr. Stone's orders had the effect of quickening a dormant appetite in

me. But I know that from the time when I discovered the secret about the medicine, my feelings in reference to total abstinence became changed. I had enjoyed the wine, and in my fancy I seemed to have enjoyed it very much. I did not say anything to Talbot and Charles, and I did not cease to resent the trick, as I called it, which Dr. Stone had played. I do not know whether or not other people are like me, but I seem to have had a great number of contradictory and therefore inconsistent feelings in my life. I was angry at what the doctor had done, and yet I was glad that I had, without any intention or connivance of my own, been brought into actual contact with what had been represented to me as a terrible foe. I pondered over the matter many times; and my thoughts took some such form as this:—It is very evident that Mr. Fenwick exaggerates the evils of drinking. I took that sherry for a week or two, just as much as if I had taken it from a decanter as other people do. It did me no harm, and why should it do me harm if I took it in the ordinary way? Then I suppose wine is no better than beer; some people say it is not as good. Fellows will have what they call "a good swig" when they have been playing and are thirsty. Why should not I? It is a nuisance

being different from other people. But I have given my word not to take any drink without first informing Mr. Fenwick that I intend to do so. I must not tell him now. What a lecture I should have! No, I will wait until I am twenty-one. He will agree that I shall be old enough then to choose for myself. It will grieve him, I know. But in this world people must choose for themselves. I have heard him say that we are not to use other men's consciences. He is the best man in the world, but he has made himself think that all who drink are in danger of becoming drunkards. It may be true of some, but it is not true of me.

CHAPTER IV.

AT CAMBRIDGE.

We had a fair amount of liberty at Clayton, quite as much as was good for us, I am sure; but the change in our circumstances, when we went to Cambridge, was very great. Talbot went to London instead, to study for an analytical chemist. But Charles and I entered X—— College at the same time. There are men at the universities who are always watching the public schools to see what likely cricketers or oarsmen are on the point of leaving. *Lillywhite's Cricketers' Companion* had sounded my praise beforehand. I remember reading with pride: "The Clayton captain has left, but his destination is Cambridge; and doubtless he will be heard of again among the famous Light-blues."

We went to live with Neville Ross for awhile, that we might read with him; and that visit did me good. Some questions looked different to me when he spoke

about them, and seemed more reasonable than when they were advocated by anybody else. I think I was a better fellow in Neville Ross's company than I was at any other time. This was no mere appearance—it was not affectation or pretence; but he had the power to quicken that which was good in me. I sometimes felt inclined to tell him all my thoughts about the temperance question, and now I wish I had. But Neville took a great deal for granted about people, as I have heard him say, "When a man cannot do wrong without grievously disappointing people, he has a strong motive for keeping right."

But he was not a dumb dog, and did not permit us to go away from him without our being armed with all the judicious cautions which he thought our Cambridge life would require. He was fond of field sports himself, and had always encouraged them in us; but he told us that we might be thrown among a lot of men at Cambridge who were not nice, and whose company would not be profitable. He said, "There are no steadier or better men there than some of the cricketers, but all kinds of sports have an attraction for some men who are anything but good or steady. It is a pity. I do not know why men should drink at a cricket match, but they do. You are safe, how-

ever, on that ground, and therefore you have a wonderful preponderance of odds in your favour. I have known a lot of fellows come to grief, but they all drank, and they all drank a good deal before the finish. Talking about the odds being in your favour reminds me that the language of gambling has penetrated into everyday life. You will find a good deal of gambling, great and small, at Cambridge, and my advice is total abstinence from that. Some people distinguish between what they call serious and playful betting. I am glad to say that I have always kept aloof from both kinds. How people can stake their money, and wish to win other people's money, as they do, is a mystery to me. I always think the tenth commandment is directly opposed to gambling of all descriptions. Men cannot gamble without coveting."

Giving advice like this to Charles was like carrying coals to Newcastle. I do not think he ever had any more inclination to lay a wager than he had to eat his own head. With me, however, it was different; I think I had an inborn tendency to stake something on the chances of a game. At Clayton, the mildest of mild gambling prevailed; as some form of gambling seems to prevail almost everywhere. I had never held aloof from it, and I had never either won or lost much.

Cadman once said, "Good people are valuable members of society, but they have a terribly inconvenient way of believing in their own form of goodness."

Those words sometimes came to my mind when Neville Ross was "just forgetting, for a moment, that he was not in the pulpit," as he called all his conversations about moral questions, great and small.

"I should like to go with you," he said, "though perhaps you would find me in the way."

This possibly we would not allow; and I am sure if we could have arranged it, by any sacrifice in our power, we would have had our tutor and friend with us during all our stay at Cambridge.

There were a number of old Claytonians at Cambridge, and we soon found ourselves among friends. Batten was there, and I cannot say that I was particularly pleased to renew his acquaintance. Cadman had gone up the previous term, and he was already established as an important personage. If I had not known differently I should have thought that he had been in residence at X—— nearly all his life. He had not an impertinent way with him, but his coolness and self-possession were as complete as is compatible with modesty.

I found that my fame had travelled before me, and it was expected that I should prove myself an acquisi-

tion in the cricket-field. Fortunately for me, it was not the season for doing anything with bat and ball; so I was not called upon to manifest my abilities in public, or I am sure I should have failed. But before we began to practise, I had quite recovered my self-possession, and was able to do justice to my reputation and the training I had received at Clayton.

I did not find my position as a teetotaler quite as peculiar at Cambridge as it had been at school. There were a number of men in the various colleges who were abstainers, and some of them said that more coffee and less wine was drunk than formerly. But the set which I became most intimate with had not a teetotaler among them. Charles and I had our rooms close together, and were as intimate as ever; but it soon became apparent that his friends were not my friends, and mine were not his. There was one point on which we differed. Charles not only abstained from drink, but he never provided it for others. I felt that I was bound by the laws of hospitality to offer my guests what they offered me. It seemed to me no matter that I refused to accept wine at their hands. I must give it to them, and they must decide for themselves whether to take it or not.

Charles was as stubborn on this question as his

father would have been. He said: "People are not teetotalers from mere whim, but because they believe drinking is the great curse from which our generation suffers. They ought to go further than protect themselves by abstinence; they ought to discourage the use of intoxicating drinks in every way possible."

Cadman was on my side, and argued the question with great ability. But even I, blind as I was, knew that Charles was prevented by delicacy from using the strongest proof which could have been adduced against the position which Cadman assumed. He was no longer the easy-going advocate who had urged me to stand true to my own side at Clayton; he had sometimes spoken as Batten was accustomed to speak on the subject; and the reason was not far to seek. There could be no doubt that Cadman was drinking more than was good for him. I knew this, though I never mentioned it; and I am sure Charles knew it. Cadman himself was ignorant of the fact, I am convinced. It is strange, but it is true, that a man may believe that he is never the worse for drink, and yet his intimate friends may know quite well that he is prone to overstep the line.

A good deal of card-playing went on, and I took part in it with keen relish. But I would not play for

heavy stakes, and I would not lay large amounts in bets. Cards brought me into intimate connection with Victor Batten again. He had improved, I thought, since he left Clayton. Years had done something, and Cambridge society had not been without its influence. He seemed to have unlimited money; but this he denied, and spoke about the Jews, as if he was already borrowing. He told me confidentially that if I needed to "raise the wind," he could show me how to do it as well as it was possible to accomplish an object which never proved very satisfactory.

"But you would manage it easily," he said. "It is only a matter of time with you. When you are twenty-one, you enter upon your plunder, and the Jews know it. They could enter upon their plunder too. So your case is about as clear and straightforward as a minor's whose name is in the peerage and whose estates are free and unencumbered."

I had not been what could be called extravagant, but I had sometimes thought that I was making debts at a rate which would surprise Mr. Fenwick, if he knew. Credit could be obtained for anything, and I had not felt the least pressure about money. What Batten said did not give me any desire to borrow, but it made me feel more easy about my liabilities. I should

soon be twenty-one, and then I could clear off everything, without having to explain to Mr. Fenwick what it was for, and without, in fact, telling him anything about it.

Batten was fond of billiards, and I often went with him to Smith's rooms, where the tables were very good, and where first-rate players could sometimes be seen. Through Batten I made the acquaintance of Captain Scrutton, who was often seen at Smith's. Batten explained to me confidentially,—

"Scrutton is a captain of something or other, at least I suppose he has been; but it is not the best way of pleasing him to ask what service he has been in. He does not pretend that the British army has been honoured with his presence. He has been with some wretched foreign lot, I suppose, where a man is allowed to wear every hair that nature has given him. No man who had served the Queen would wear a beard like that."

I did not like Captain Scrutton, though he appeared to take a fancy to me. He was a gentlemanly sort of man, or his company would not have been tolerated in places where I met him; but there was a way with him which to me was significant of hardness and cruelty. He spoke about absent people as if he had a grudge against them.

Cadman said to me: "Scrutton seems quite charmed with you. I heard him asking about you to-day, and he was more interested in your welfare than I have ever known him to be about anybody else. I am not sure that the sign is a good one. He is not a guardian-angel by any means. I doubt whether he has ever tried to befriend anybody yet, and it is just possible that he will not try. But most men he plucks scientifically, without assuming any sentiment whatever. How he would play his part if he loved his victim, I cannot tell."

"What is Scrutton?" I asked; for though I had met him two or three times, yet I had not taken the trouble to make any inquiries about him.

Cadman replied: "Captain Scrutton may be a very honourable man, but he is very fond of betting, and he has a way of winning. When he is not at Cambridge, he is at Newmarket; so people say. He knows a great deal about horses, and billiards, and cards, though he plays very little himself. It is said that he can borrow money for people. Perhaps he lends it himself, though he says not. Captain Scrutton is Captain Scrutton, that is all I know. But he is interested in you. He likes you for your own sake, I suppose. He has one good quality: he is not a teetotaler. Neither am I, and I think a brandy and soda would do me good."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN SCRUTTON.

CADMAN said one day: "Cambridge is a grand place for division of labour. Some men devote themselves to books, and some men devote themselves to more active pursuits. But we must not act the Pharisee, and call ourselves virtuous, because we happen to prefer things which are really laborious, instead of sitting still and looking into the opinions of the ancients. 'Live and let live,' that is the axiom of the tolerant."

I knew this was his jocular way of apologizing for his own neglect of study. Perhaps, at the same time, he was putting in a good word for me. I was not quite as much absorbed in sports as may be supposed from the prominence which I have given to them in this record, but I was far from paying that attention to my studies which was necessary to gain me the good opinion of our college authorities.

"We are running a waiting race," Cadman said; "husbanding our resources, you know; and when the proper time arrives, we shall come in with a rush, and make some of our friends stare."

Charles was present at the time, and he merrily suggested that it was possible to wait too long, and then we should find ourselves hopelessly in the rear.

When the cricket season began I found myself in my element; but every day I rebelled more and more in my own mind against the restrictions which had been imposed upon me. It was in vain that Charles pointed out to me that I was in first-rate condition physically; and that the men with whom I had been intimate, and who were far from being teetotalers, were compelled either to change their habits or to stand aside while others contended with bats and balls.

Captain Scrutton spent a good deal of time on the cricket-ground, and he seemed to take a deep interest in the game. But a man who talks much about cricket soon betrays how little or how much he knows about the subject, and it was a standing joke with some men to put the captain "through his paces," as it was called. He did not know much about the game, but he talked away without being conscious of the

diversion which he produced. But there was no gambling connected with cricket, and so the captain was not in danger of paying for his ignorance, as might have been the case if he had assumed the same kind of familiarity with some other sports.

The "Captain's Quarters" was the name which we always gave to his rooms; and very pleasant quarters they were. He was fond of company, and entertained his guests in first-rate style. Cadman pretended not to like him, but he was often seen among those who accepted the captain's invitations. When I mentioned this inconsistency, Cadman replied,—

"I go because I like the men I meet there. I sacrifice myself to my friendship, and ought to be praised and not censured. Then I go to take care of you young ones, that I may be sure you keep sober. How could I forgive myself if in my absence you broke the pledges of your childhood, and had no good Samaritan near to tell you when you were drunk? Each man has a great work to do, and this is mine."

He seemed to jeer at everything, and I did not tell him when my mind was made up to inform Mr. Fenwick that I intended to "change my mode of life, and take refreshment like other people." Those were the words which I used to myself when I pondered

the matter over. I did not care to call it "breaking the pledge." Thus we satisfy ourselves with words.

I never wrote a letter in my life which cost me so much trouble as the one in which I informed Mr. Fenwick of my determination. I loved him so much, that it was impossible for me to take any step which would cause him grief without suffering myself. I have said nothing about my love for Gertrude, but I could not help wondering what influence my resolution would have upon her. All the Fenwicks had adopted the father's views on the subject of temperance; but I could not help thinking that if she loved me as I believed she did, and as I knew that I loved her, she would not permit a prejudice of that kind to interfere with her. I worked myself up into a mood which seemed to me almost heroic. It seemed a matter of principle with me that I should assert my liberty, and not be controlled by what I called the unreasonable crotchets of my beloved guardian. Nevertheless, the letter was a painful task.

I had been spending a good deal of time with Captain Scrutton, and had found his company very pleasing, especially when he kept off cricket. Perhaps he had an instinctive feeling that his opinions on that subject were ridiculous to me, for he did not often

impose them upon me. But there were many things he could talk about, and talk about well. He was not the sort of man a wise father would choose as the companion for his son. I soon discovered that his view of life was not a lofty one, and this ought to have repelled me; but I am sorry to say it did not. He seemed to have a liking for my company, and this was flattering.

One evening I dined with him alone, and we had a long talk together after dinner. He apologized for the absence of other company, and said that he had intended me to meet several choice spirits who had expressed a desire to make my acquaintance; but, unfortunately, they had sent word at the last minute that they could not come. I replied that a quiet night would suit me admirably, as I had been going about a good deal lately. He talked about horses and races and various turf topics during dinner, and then we adjourned to what he called his "den." This was a comfortable sitting-room, where he kept a few books; not to read, he said, but to look respectable in a place like Cambridge.

Cadman's sneers had not been wasted upon me, and I remember that he had mentioned among the captain's habits one which occurred to me that night

He said: "The captain sometimes invites a fellow to meet some choice spirits, who do not turn up. There are several hours to be spent *tête-à-tête*, and something must be done to while away the time. The captain will do anything you like to suggest. He never seems to suggest anything himself, but it comes to cards at last; and rumour seems to imply that the captain was never known to come off the loser on such occasions. It is all luck, you know—all luck."

This statement of Cadman's came to my mind several times, and I could not help wondering whether my host was really a respectable sharper or a gentleman who was maligned. But I resolved to profit by the warning, and to suggest nothing in the way of pastime, and to take care that if my host had any sinister schemes they should be thwarted for once.

But there was no break in the conversation, and I began to think I had wronged the captain. "Another of Cadman's libels," I said to myself, when the subject recurred to me.

"Is there nothing you will take?" the captain asked, helping himself to brandy and water. "You might try some very light wine. It is not to my taste, but some people seem to like it."

"Thank you, no," I replied; "I never take anything."

"Well, you know best; but it looks so queer sitting and not wetting your lips. It is not a commonplace circumstance in these rooms, I can assure you. Have some more coffee, if you will not take anything better."

But I did not feel as if I wanted coffee, and we acquired the habit at Bettenham of not drinking unless we were thirsty. Mr. Fenwick was fond of saying, "Drinking for the sake of drinking is only a sauce to make laziness palatable."

I quoted this remark to the captain, adding, "But I am one of those mortals who can be lazy now and then without anything to help it down."

"Mr. Fenwick is your guardian, I think I have heard you say."

I did not remember having told the captain anything about it, but I nodded acquiescence.

"He must be an odd old party, with very antiquated views on social subjects," continued the captain. "His sons come up here one after another, and they live as if the everyday world were wrong. Not one of them looks upon the wine cup when it is red, or any other colour. These things are antediluvian."

I could not resist the temptation to make a small joke; so I said,—

"You then believe that Noah discovered the intoxicating principle for the first time, and that the old world managed to become too bad to live, without getting drunk?"

The captain looked up sharply, as if to discover my motive; but I kept my countenance.

"I have not studied that subject," he answered slowly. "I simply meant that Mr. Fenwick's views are out of date. Pardon my saying so; present company is always excepted. But do you not think the debt we owe to society demands that we should put our eccentricities aside, and do what the testimony of the ages has declared to be essential to good fellowship? Take 'the flowing bowl' out of poetry and fiction, and where are you?"

What the captain said was very much like what I had said and thought myself, and I could easily have agreed with him; but I thought I would try him with some of the arguments which had been used against me. Charles would have rejoiced to hear me say,—

"I know many people who can spend their time together, and enjoy each other's company, without the flowing bowl; and I know others who, with the flowing bowl, both do and say many things which

they afterwards repent of. Poetry and fiction have helped to make some things attractive which sober moments cannot contemplate without shame."

"That is Parson Fenwick," the captain exclaimed, with a loud but not very merry laugh. Then he added bitterly,—"When such people get their own way, the world will become washed out."

For a moment there was a look on his face which was almost fiendish; but this disappeared again, and he asked blandly,—

"Now, tell me, Naresborough, does this sort of thing suit you? I heard about your family years ago; and I can assure you that there was no finer fellow of his time than your father. It is enough to make him uneasy in his grave, to think of his son going through life without a single spark of the old fire. Pardon me; what I say is for your good. You may think you can be a Naresborough on toast and water, but you cannot. The tales I heard about them in the good old times!"

Cadman once said, "Scrutton's brandy and water ought to be called brandy and damp, for there is not enough water used to do more than make the brandy dream of the pure beverage."

These words of Cadman's came to my mind as I

noticed that the captain drank a good deal; and that though he always pretended to dilute the spirit, yet it was more a pretence than anything. He was one of those men who can drink very freely without showing it much; but I could not help thinking that it was taking hold upon him. I had a thorough dislike for drunkenness, and began to wonder how soon I could make an excuse for leaving him.

I did not entirely neglect my books, and I said, "I ought to go and get a bit of something done to-night; so much of one's daytime is taken up with the fields, that it is necessary to improve the hours which do not shine."

But the captain would not hear of it, and laid that to the charge of my teetotalism. "If you had been drinking, you would not have suggested anything half so cruel. Would anybody with the merest trace of human charity in him propose to leave a fellow to himself at this early hour?"

I thought he was going to suggest that we should do something to pass the time, but he did not. I asked him whether he knew my father; for I had heard very little about him, and my curiosity had been started by what Scrutton had said.

"I cannot say that I was intimate with him,"

replied the captain, "but I have seen him frequently. He knew what life was, and enjoyed it. Poor fellow, he was cut off early, as good fellows often are."

I liked to hear about my father, especially as the speaker said nothing but what was good of him. He did not mention my uncle Kemp; but that was easily understood. I had in some manner heard that my uncle had disgraced himself, so I appreciated the captain's delicacy in refraining from introducing his name.

When I returned to my rooms, I sat down and wrote the letter to Mr. Fenwick, which had been on my mind so long. I knew it was an important step which I was taking; but I never thought of it as having any bearing upon my own future, except as far as it would cause disappointment and pain to those whom I loved so much. I knew they would be grieved, but I never dreamt of danger to myself.

CHAPTER VI.

MAKING MY INTENTIONS KNOWN.

SOME of Captain Scrutton's friends were in the habit of complimenting him on his lodgings, telling him he had all the comforts of home without any of its inconveniences or responsibilities. He always received the remarks with a smile, and said that lodgings, like most institutions, were often unjustly condemned. Mrs. Newfax, with whom he lodged, was a widow of a very uncertain age; but she was quiet and orderly, and kept her household in good condition. It was generally supposed that the captain paid liberally for his accommodation, as though the house was tolerably large, yet there were no other lodgers in it.

Cadman always spoke of Mrs. Newfax as the woman with a story. He said she had gone through something or other at some time, as anybody could

judge from her appearance. Scrutton never condescended to enlighten either him or anybody else upon the subject. It was his custom, he said, to take the good things of life as they were presented to him, and not to ask too many questions about their antecedents.

Mrs. Newfax never seemed to look at anybody. Her eyes were turned downwards; and if you met her in the street, she did not see you. Cadman called her volumes one and two of a mystery, and was fond of wondering whether she was looking for volume three, to complete the set.

I saw the captain at the cricket-ground on the day succeeding the one when I had dined with him. His hair and beard were black, but they had the bluish shade which betrays the dyer's art. He was dressed in juvenile fashion, and at a distance he looked quite young. But there was a look about his eyes that day which I ascribed to the brandy of the previous evening. He shook his head when he saw me, and told the men who were near that I had been too severe with him, as I had compelled him to do all the drinking the day before, and it had proved a hard task. They said it was a shame, and that all kinds of selfishness ought to be put down. Cadman said, "A man who monopolizes more than his share

of sobriety ought to suffer for it." This was agreed to by all who were present; and I was asked what I had to say for myself.

"Give the prisoner a fair hearing," said Batten, who was present. "Even a teetotaler ought not to be treated as an outlaw."

This kind of talk was nothing new, but I usually let it pass. This time, however, I thought there was a good opportunity to make known my intentions for the future. It may seem absurd, but I had so often refused to drink with my friends, both in public and private, that I felt some degree of embarrassment about commencing a practice which would be quite different from what I had done in the past. I do not say that my conscience was upbraiding me, but I wished for the time when the novelty would be worn away. I imagined everybody would be much interested in it, and that I should be the object of an inconvenient amount of attention. Then I had a feeling which I may as well acknowledge: I could not endure to think that some of my friends would take to themselves the credit of having convinced me of what they would call my errors. They had not convinced me; I had convinced myself; though their companionship had not been without its influence.

"Make the best of a bad job," I said to myself. So I told them quietly that in a few days they would be able to welcome me among themselves as a comrade of the glass and tankard, as I had made up my mind to try both sides of the question, and test by experiment whether or not their praises of Bacchus were deserved. Some of them thought I was joking, but others saw that I meant what I said.

"Bravo for the emancipation!" said Captain Scrutton, in a husky voice. "Bravo for the brave and free! 'Britons never shall be slaves.'"

Fielding, who was captain of the eleven, was there, and he did not speak with nearly as much enthusiasm. He said,—

"It is rather an awkward time to make experiments of that kind. Most of us give up drinking now, that we may get into better condition for the big matches. Had you not better postpone your fresh course until after we have polished off our adversaries?"

I knew that I was pretty sure of a place in the eleven; and though I was not foolish enough to think that total abstinence could interfere with a man's cricket, yet I did not believe that drink in moderation would injure anybody's play.

Cadman was there, and he began to talk as I

thought he would. He said he was sure all the time that his words would not be wasted. He should feel proud of his proselyte, and take to himself credit for having trained me in the way that I should go. "When you are making your hundred, not out, at Lord's, I shall say to the admiring multitude, 'That is my son; I made him what he is. Those powers were developed under my tuition. I cast my bread upon the waters, and there it is.' Teaching right views of social life to teetotalers has been called casting bread upon the waters, from time immemorial."

I thought the best way of ridding myself of this kind of talk was to go into the dressing-room and change my clothes, that I might practise at the nets. This I did, and felt that one disagreeable part of my task was over.

Several of us walked back together, and we intended to call at a well-known cricketing house, that those of our party who wished to refresh might do so. Scrutton was still with us, and he was busy talking about the probable winner of the Granley Stakes. At such times he was an oracle to those who indulged in turf speculations; and several bets were booked. But he was not quite himself, he

seemed shaken; and he knew that we noticed it, for he said to me, "It is a pity your repentance did not come sooner, and then it would have saved me from doing double duty last night. But the dog that bit you heals the wounds he made."

As we were walking along, we met Mrs. Newfax, with her eyes turned down as usual; and she passed us as if she did not see any of us.

Cadman could not miss the opportunity of railing the captain in his customary manner. "Scrutton, that worthy woman with whom you lodge is still mysterious. She is looking for volume three of her life's problem. Perhaps she is going to the cricket-ground to see if it is there."

Scrutton was not well pleased at this. He usually took no notice of Cadman's jokes, but now he seemed disconcerted. This, however, I put down to the credit of the "double duty" which he had spoken about.

When we reached Bowlers, the house for which we were bound, Scrutton excused himself, and said he had just remembered an engagement which had slipped his memory. He would see us at the match to-morrow; and he left us. The match he referred to was a college match between X—— and Y——, in which I was to take part.

"Richard is not himself again," said Cadman, when we were seated at Bowlers. "The captain did not relish what I said about Mrs. Newfax. I never knew him resent my innocent remarks before. The captain drank too much last night, Naresborough. Let that be a warning to you. The path you have chosen has its pit-falls. I know nothing which fills those pit-falls better than brandy and soda; so with the approval of my friends I will fill a pit-fall now."

Scrutton was not at the match next day. Perhaps he thought we should miss him, and be disconsolate without him, for he sent a note to Batten, with whom he was very intimate, and said that his old enemy the gout was upon him, and he could not get out; but he hoped his friends would not leave him to eat out his heart in solitude. It was a good match, but we beat Y—— easily. Cadman proposed that some of us should call and see Scrutton that night. "You must go, Naresborough," he said, "for I am sure the fault of this sickness lies at your door."

We went, and found the captain in his den with the brandy before him. His leg was bandaged and resting on a stool; otherwise there were no evidences that he was different from usual. Cadman expressed his pleasure at seeing the captain faithful to the

bottle, which he thought was tabooed when gout made its appearance.

"I suppose I ought to leave it alone," replied the captain; "but this is not a serious attack—it keeps me within doors, that is all. How did the match come off?"

"Behold one of the winners!" said Cadman, pointing to me; "and if he does so well on water, what will he do on beer?"

We spent an hour or two there, and the cards were brought out. Some few bets were also booked; but it was what Cadman called a quiet night, and we returned to the college.

"The captain is off colour," said Cadman. "I am a prejudiced mortal, I know, but I should like to bet him something he has no more gout than I have. The gout is a well-known visitor in the palace of the Cadmans, and I have studied its effects upon people. Hence I declare, to all whom it may concern, Captain Scrutton of the mounted footmen is not suffering from the gout."

"Do you mean that he is shamming?" I asked, wondering what Cadman was driving at.

"That is what I mean. He has some reason for keeping within doors. If it is not so, call me no prophet, either of the turf or anything else. My

bets are ready on the point, if confiding friends will do me the favour. I know you call it Cadman's craze, and you wonder why I have anything to do with the captain under the circumstances. Nevertheless, my friends, although I am unworthy, and though you might ask with amazement why I presume to cast the first stone, yet are my words spoken in soberness and wisdom."

It was no use reasoning with Cadman when he was in that mood, so I recommended him to go to bed, and went to my own rooms. Charles Fenwick came in, and we sat together awhile talking about the cricket match: he had been present part of the time, and then had gone away with his brother Ellis, who could not remain till the close.

"Ellis has had a visitor to-day," said Charles, "and I have helped to entertain him."

"Who was that?" I asked. "Anybody from Bettenham or the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, from that district," replied Charles. "It was a Mr. Tobin, who is a great authority on bee-culture. There is a meeting in Cambridge of bee-keepers—a kind of British Association devoted to one idea—and Mr. Tobin is one of the principal speakers. He seems

to be a very intelligent man. It is his first visit here, and he was delighted with the place. He seemed to know more about the colleges than anybody I ever talked with. I am afraid he will be ashamed of me, for I must have seemed very ignorant in his eyes. Ellis says he once stayed some time at Bettenham, and he was very intimate with father and mother; but it was when we were babes. Ellis can just remember him. He was asking about you. He knew your people, I think. From what Ellis says, he must have been employed in a confidential capacity. But he is a very well-informed man, and an enthusiastic teetotaler. He was delighted to hear that we are all following in my father's footsteps."

I thought Charles looked uneasy as he spoke these words.

"I suppose you have heard something about the step I am about to take," I said, in as careless a voice as I could assume.

"Some of the men were talking at the cricket-ground, but I put it down as talk and nothing more."

"It was not talk. I have written to your father, in accordance with my promise, telling him that I intend to do like other people. Don't look so horrified. I have not made up my mind to be a drunkard. I

know quite well that I shall be as sober all my life as you will."

There was a long pause, and then Charles said, "I am very sorry to hear about this. I had a kind of dread that the rumours might be true, but I tried to convince myself of the contrary. I will not say anything about it to-night. When did you write?"

I told him, and expressed an opinion that I should receive a letter on the morrow.

"I think you will receive more than a letter. I shall be surprised if my father does not come up."

"Surely he will not give himself that trouble," I exclaimed.

"I feel sure he will," was the reply. "I think my father has some special reason for wanting you to be a teetotaler. What it is I cannot say, but I am sure there is something. We must wait and see."

Then we changed the subject, but I knew we continued to think about the words which had passed between us in reference to the drink. We were not quite natural with each other, though Charles was as gentle and loving as ever, and I am glad to remember that I said nothing unkind.

CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN TWO MINDS.

CHARLES was right in his conjecture. I received a letter the next morning from Mr. Fenwick, saying when he would arrive. This made me harden myself for the struggle, which I knew as well as possible that I had before me. I did not see why Mr. Fenwick should give himself the trouble to come all the way to Cambridge. Why did he not write all he had to say? Had he such unbounded confidence in his own powers, that he thought he had only to come, and see, and conquer? These petulant thoughts were the first which passed through my mind; and then I am glad to say that the other side of the subject presented itself to me. It seemed as if some angel of light showed me the love and self-sacrifice which this long journey on my behalf proved. I could not help saying to myself, "How true to his convictions Mr.

Fenwick is! I am almost sorry I said anything to the men about my intention. I am afraid he will be pained; and, after all, there was no need to do it. I might have waited until I am twenty-one, and then he would have relieved me from my promise. I am sure of that, for he was always the best and kindest of men, and was never unreasonable except on the teetotal question. Still, what has been done cannot be undone. He is coming, and I must go through with it now."

That was not by any means a happy day. I told Charles that his father was coming at night, and we arranged to meet the train. I spent as much time at the cricket-ground as I could; but even cricket seemed to have lost its charms for me. I was practising at the nets, and seemed unable to do anything with the bat. The captain was there, and he expressed a hope that I had not already begun to carry out the resolution I had mentioned. "If so, Naresborough, the sooner you go back to the pump the better, for I never saw you handle the bat in such a manner."

"It is not that," I replied. "If anything must be blamed, blame the pump, for I am as teetotal as ever."

"Coming events cast their shadows before," said

Cadman. "He is suffering from anticipatory intoxication. I know the disorder myself, and have sometimes felt its effects."

"Cadman calls substance shadow, and shadow substance," was the remark of Batten, who was always glad to have a fling at Cadman whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Cadman replied, "If Batten begins to perceive distinctions, there is hope for him yet. Bravo, Batten! you are the man to point out the difference between wit and humour, with original examples of neither!"

This raillery between Cadman and Batten withdrew attention from me, and I was glad to give up practice for that day.

Cadman joined me in the dressing-room, and asked me what fate or fortune possessed me, that I was relinquishing an opportunity to weary myself in the sun for an hour or two. I told him I did not feel in form for cricket.

"Nor do I," said he, as if he had just made the discovery, when the fact was that Cadman and cricket were becoming strangers to each other. He proposed that we should call and see the captain, and inquire about his gout.

"I know he will lie," said Cadman; "he always

does. But there is always something fresh about his mendacity."

I did not feel in the humour for Captain Scrutton's company, but allowed myself to be led there by my satirical companion.

"Here come the two volumes of mystery," whispered Cadman, as we walked along. It was Mrs. Newfax, but as usual she seemed to notice nobody. She passed us as if she had never seen us before.

"And she wears a veil," said Cadman, "which is an innovation, as far as my knowledge of her is concerned. It is late in life to begin preserving the complexion."

We found the captain with the brandy before him, and with his leg and foot resting on a stool, but without the bandage.

Cadman said: "We live and learn, and I am thankful for the lesson: the proper cure for gout is brandy and water. The brandy is to be taken inwardly, and the water is to be left on the table. I am glad to have the information, for we have gout in our family, and it is sure to visit me sooner or later."

"Never mind the gout," said Scrutton, rather testily; "it is bad enough, and makes itself known without any efforts of one's friends to keep it before one's mind."

"Right as usual, O son of Mars," replied Cadman; "and if gout is not a pleasant subject, what say you to the odds against Montreal for the Derby? Is such talk more profitable for a sick man?"

These two were soon deep in conversation about horses, and my mind was busy with the expected interview with Mr. Fenwick. Some bets were made, and I was asked whether or not I intended to tempt Dame Fortune; but I resisted the temptation.

"Time drags on as if it would never pass," said the captain. "I wish I could persuade you both to dine with me, and bring another, that we might spend a pleasant evening together. I would almost as soon be in prison as have the days and nights to myself."

I was obliged to decline the invitation, pleading a previous engagement; but Cadman promised to act the Good Samaritan.

Charles and I went to the station, and met the train in which Mr. Fenwick arrived from London. Ellis was not able to meet his father, and had sent a note to Charles telling him so. The greeting I received was as hearty as ever. No stranger would have supposed that a keen contention was likely to take place between us, and that I was about to carry out a determination which would cause grief to my guardian.

"I always feel young again when I come here," Mr. Fenwick said, as we drove through the streets. Ellis met us, and joined the party, explaining what had prevented his going to the station. When Mr. Fenwick looked at him and Charles, he said, "It seems only yesterday that I was here at X——, and yet a good many years have passed; and they have been happy years too, thank God."

The words went to my heart. I felt as if I were about to dash the cup of happiness from his lips. But he betrayed by neither word nor sign that he had any painful thoughts about me.

We spent a pleasant evening with Ellis, and then Mr. Fenwick said, "Let us walk as far as to X—— together, Samson."

Nothing was said until we reached my rooms; then I "sported my oak," and sat opposite to my guardian. He was not in the least embarrassed, but looked as if he had an everyday task to perform. He said,—

"I am glad you wrote to me, Samson, about the matter which has been in your thoughts. But I knew you would, if the time ever came when you wanted to give up total abstinence. If I had not been sure of that, I should have told you long ago about a duty

which has pressed upon me all these years, and which I have never liked to discharge."

He said this in a sweet and gentle manner, as if I had done something praiseworthy in giving him the notice I did. He was perfectly right in assuming that nothing would have tempted me to break my promise to him. But I was puzzled to understand what he meant by "a duty" which he had to discharge.

"I am sure," I said, "you have done all to me that a father could have done, and you will never have to reproach yourself with neglect."

"I hope you are right," replied Mr. Fenwick. "I think when you know everything, you will stick to the principles in which you have been trained. Your letter gave me a painful shock, and made me think that I ought to have taken you into my confidence sooner—that I might have told you why you have been trained in strict abstinence. For you must know now that there was a reason. It has not been a whim of mine. It was the solemnly expressed wish of your father."

"My father!" I exclaimed. "Why, I heard only a short time ago that he was the best of good fellows, and that he enjoyed his bottle and glass to the last.

Pardon me using such language about him, but those were the words which were used to me."

"Who has been talking to you about your father?" Mr. Fenwick asked anxiously.

I told him it was Captain Scrutton, who remembered him, and who had often heard him spoken about as one of the merriest among the merry.

"Did you ever wonder why I and Mr. Smiddens were chosen to be your guardians?" Mr. Fenwick asked, going back to his calm and loving style. "Mr. Smiddens, it is true, has left matters pretty much in my hands; but did you never wonder why I was chosen to be your guardian?"

I had not thought very much about this question, but when it had entered my mind I had dismissed it again. For it was impossible to know Mr. Fenwick without thinking of him as the very best guardian who could be chosen anywhere. I said so to him, and the good man blushed to hear my natural praise.

"It is kind of you to say so, Samson, and I believe you mean it," he replied; "but now that everything must be told, you will have to learn that your father selected me and Mr. Smiddens without our knowledge, because of our known devotion to total abstinence. You had an uncle, and he may be alive now—your

father's brother Kemp. He was your father's evil genius, and by means of drink and gambling almost brought him to ruin. In your father's weakest hour he had strength enough to take steps which would guard you and your sister against poverty, and keep you from the evil influence of your kinsman. I knew something of your family, but not much, when one night a sealed packet was brought to me with a letter, which asked me to keep the packet twelve months, and then open it, unless some one asked for it in the meantime, using a certain word to show his authority. That packet contained a bond for a large sum of money, which your father had sent to me, as he was under the influence of your uncle, who was trying to gain all your father's property by gambling. There was also a paper in the packet which your father intended you and your sister to read, he said, when you became old enough to understand it. I have brought that paper with me, my dear boy, and I shall leave it with you. I know you will read it very attentively, and I hope you will pray about it; for you need God's guidance in this hour, as indeed you do in every hour."

Mr. Fenwick took the paper from his pocket and gave it to me. What he had said was quite mystify-

ing to me. I had always thought that if my father had been alive he would have sided with me in my resolve for emancipation. I could scarcely put my thoughts together or frame any words of speech. Mr. Fenwick said, "Good-night, and God bless you," and I was alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VICTORY.

It is impossible to say what effect my father's communication would have had upon me if I had been accustomed to drinking at the time when I received it. Perhaps it might have failed in its object. But fortunately there was nothing but an obstinate disposition to make me favourably disposed towards the drinking customs of my friends. I felt as if I was unduly coerced, and almost contemplated myself as a champion of freedom, in the resolution which I had formed to give up the total abstinence in which I had been trained. It was not for want of opportunity that I did not feel how fraught with dangers intoxicating drinks are; evidence which ought to have been sufficient for me seemed to make no impression upon my mind. My attitude had been favourable towards the moderate use of alcoholic beverages. This must

have arisen from a spirit of opposition to those by whom I had been trained. My eyes needed to be opened that I might see the truth, and my father's communication opened them.

He did not spare himself; but how I loved him as I read the earnest words with which he described the manner of his fall, and his great yearning that his children might never be torn by the raging conflict which he had felt. Whether right or wrong, he was filled with the conviction that the Naresboroughs were hereditary drunkards, and that for them moderation had become impossible. He said:—"We have not had a moderate drinker among us for generations. I do not know what has been the case with my ancestors, but I can say for myself that I have striven with all my might to keep from drunkenness. But I have made treaties with my foe instead of waging endless war against it. I wish I was in a place where no drink could be obtained. I form resolutions of amendment, but the horrible longing for that which is destroying me comes back again, and I have not strength of will to thwart it. Yet I was not always in this condition of servitude. If any one had told me my danger in my youth, I could easily have abstained; that is why I am writing this to you, my children.

It would be better for you to die in your infancy than to live as I am living now. We are a doomed race, but the doom is not inevitable. If you never acquire the taste for drink, abstinence will never be difficult for you; but I believe if you do acquire that taste, sobriety will be impossible."

I do not care to transcribe all that my father wrote. It was terrible reading to me. The picture came before me of a wrecked and ruined man, who in the midst of his agony thought more of his children's welfare than of his own loss and shame.

But my disputatious spirit was not silenced. In spite of all I had read, I felt that I was strong enough to keep within the limits of moderation. I read the paper more than once, however, and these words arrested my attention as they had not done before :—

"It is possible that if I had been warned of my danger, I should not have heeded the warning. I could have tested myself, and it would not have been difficult for me to have abstained for weeks together. I do not know when the habit overmastered me, but it has done so, and now I feel my chains. If I try to overcome my temptation, I seem to be in agony; and yet, when I succumb to it, I suffer agony of another kind. Drink does not satisfy me, it only grati-

fies one part of my nature, and leaves the other part full of remorse. Drink is my curse, whether I take it or not."

In the paper were many references to the mother whom I had never known. My father condemned himself severely for his neglect and cruelty, and this he laid to the charge of those habits which drink had fostered.

The pathetic warning against gambling moved me to tears, as in fact did many things in the communication which my father had left for me. He said: "I have been weak, wickedly weak in allowing others to lead me into ways which I knew to be wrong. It was not love of gain which made me a gambler at first, but love of excitement; and when I had been drinking, I was ready to risk anything. Latterly I have cherished the hope that I may win back my losses. But what a horrid life is this! I ought to have been one of the happiest men on earth, but I doubt whether anybody is more miserable."

I never spent a night like that, and hope never to spend one like it again. My thoughts frequently wandered away from the subject of the warning, and I found myself wondering what kind of death my father had died. I had a vague fear that his weak-

ness continued to the end, and that he never recovered the self-control which he seemed to long for. Then I asked myself, "Is it possible that the danger to me is as great as it was to him?" I did not think so. How can the man who has not been through the fire understand what it is like? I felt strong; but so had my father. Could it be possible that abstinence was the secret of my self-control? Would drink enslave me if I tampered with it?

Then I began to imagine myself ill-used. It was malignity of fate which caused me to be born of a race which appeared to have only two courses to pursue; one was total abstinence, and the other was drunkenness. But better thoughts came to me after this. Some spirit of common sense seemed to say, "What hardship is there about it now you know the danger? You might have complained if you had been allowed to plunge into the vortex without warning. But you do not really care about the drink. Your rebellion has been mere self-assertion and wilfulness. Thank God you have not the appetite, and do not waste time in framing complaints."

But I shall never be able to recollect all the thoughts which passed through my mind during that night. It was broad daylight when I went to bed, and though

ordinarily I had no need to woo slumber to me, yet I lay awake and pondered over the unexpected revelations which I had read. Sometimes I was tempted to say, "I will do as I resolved, and will prove to them that their fears were groundless. I know I could keep sober." But words and sentences from my father's paper came to my mind, and I was silenced as if in the presence of the reproachful dead.

A little fitful slumber was all I had and I was glad to get out into the fresh air. I resolved to take a long walk into the country. I hurried away, thankful that nobody was about, for I seemed to dread the companionship of my friends. I wanted to be alone, that I might weigh this question which had been thrust before me, for something must be decided.

As I was crossing Parker's Piece, I saw a familiar object before me. It was Captain Scrutton, not limping, but walking as well and upright as ever. This was something wonderful. I did not know what to think. Was it possible that Cadman's half-jocular assertion was true, that the captain simply kept in hiding during the day? This certainly looked suspicious. But I did not wish to cause the captain any embarrassment, and I did not feel in the humour for his company; so I left the footpath, and walked across

the grass in another direction. But here I saw some one else who arrested my attention. This was an ancient-looking man, who was closely watching Captain Scrutton. At any other time I should have been interested in this affair, but other thoughts claimed my attention.

The walk in the fresh air did me good, and I was able to think more calmly about my troubles. One aspect of the subject had quite escaped my mind before. I had been thinking as if danger from drink fell only to the lot of those who had hereditary tendencies towards drunkenness; but now I remembered that some of my own friends, whose families were habitually sober, had proved themselves to be in danger of falling into the excesses which my father had written about. Cadman was constantly in my mind. The lurid light of the confession which my father had made seemed to fall upon Cadman. Some people would call him a drunkard already; he was fast becoming one, I knew. So it was not all heredity. There were dangers on every side to those who made friendship with so potent an evil. Some old words of Mr. Fenwick's recurred to my mind: "Out of every hundred persons who take intoxicating drink, a certain percentage will become drunkards;

and nobody can say beforehand who they are. The drunkard's child may weather the storm, and the sober man's child may become a wreck. This is not the most probable issue, I know, but it is possible. One thing is certain — a percentage will become drunkards." Then I remembered that he went on to say :—" The descent from moderate drinking to drunkenness is a sliding-scale : to some it dips suddenly, and the end is soon ; to others it dips very gradually, and the moderate drinker of a lifetime may become a drunkard in old age."

Yes, I had heard him say it all, and I had listened with prejudice in my heart. And what he had said about there being no imperceptible stages between total abstinence and drunkenness came back to me. " The two states are in two social worlds, and a man must deliberately and knowingly pass from the one to the other before he can possibly enter it. The teetotaler cannot unconsciously become a slave to drink ; the moderate drinker can."

I had my father's paper with me, and I read it again and again. My course was dim and uncertain at first. There was pride to be overcome. I did not like to acknowledge that I had been wrong, though I knew how easy Mr. Fenwick would make my repent-

ance, as far as he was concerned. But I thought about my companions—those who had heard me make my foolish announcement. I called it foolish, and can see now that I was not far from my right senses when I reached that point. I wished it was all over and the men knew that I should abide in my old way. I came to that at length. There seemed no other way open to me. My dead father, and the man who had been all to me that a father could be, were not to be thwarted and contradicted by my wilfulness. They were right, and I was wrong; that was the end of it.

When I reached this point my mind settled down, and I felt more satisfied than I had felt for years. All the way back to Cambridge the difficulties seemed to disappear, and I felt almost ready to be the champion of my new position against all comers. I suppose my obstinacy and self-will had gone round to the other side. It was not vacillation, as I had abundant reason for the change. I began to feel angry with myself for the attitude I had lately assumed, as it was evident to me that I had nothing to gain and everything to lose from indulging in strong drink.

When I saw Mr. Fenwick, I shook him by the hand and said, "Thank you, sir, for your unceasing

kindness to me. You were right, and I was wrong." I also gave him my father's paper, but made no remark about it.

I suppose he was satisfied that I meant what I said, for he did not speak another word about the subject. My task with my companions was not as difficult as I anticipated. The captain of the cricket eleven appeared to think that his warnings had convinced me of my errors; Cadman, in a moment of remorse, congratulated me on my decision; but Victor Batten was disgusted, and said something about milk-sops. The matter was soon forgotten, however, and I knew that my temptation was dead.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY.

My temptation was dead, and it has never had a resurrection. The paper which my father left behind was given to Ethel, that she might read it; but I do not think there was any need, for the training at Bettenham Vicarage had found suitable material in her, and she never thought of giving up the principles which had been instilled into her. It was almost a pity to pain her with the revelation which the paper contained. Mr. Fenwick, however, was too conscientious to neglect the duty which had been imposed upon him. Dear Ethel was very different from her wayward, self-willed brother; but we met together at last in full sympathy on that important spot which my father and mother had desired for us. We saw with clear eyes the nature of the curse which had ruined our family, and we resolved together that we

would have no dealings with the evil, but would walk in the paths of absolute soberness all the days of our lives.

Ethel is now the wife of Charles Fenwick, and they live at the rectory yonder; for Mr. Sarpell is dead. Need I say who my own wife is? Gertrude Fenwick, the sweet companion of my boyhood, is nearer and dearer to me now than ever.

Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick are still at Bettenham. The old vicarage is very quiet now, but there are many loving hearts in the parish which treasure the vicar and his wife in unceasing fondness. The "Soldier Laddie" and the "Cheshire Cheese" are still in existence, and they exert their influence to counteract the good which the vicar and his wife are always doing. But those worthy people do not despair; they are working and waiting for better times, when all the efforts of men will be directed towards the spread of truth and virtue. It is interesting to hear Mr. Fenwick talk about the changes which he has seen since he first came to Bettenham. At that time nearly everybody drank to excess, either constantly or occasionally; but it is not so now. There are many men and women in the parish who are as much interested in total abstinence as he is himself.

George and Ellis and Talbot are prospering in their several spheres, and sometimes we all meet together again and talk over old times, and pay our visit to the little grave where sweet Lillian lies.

It is not my purpose to say anything about my life at Cambridge after that foolish episode when I was nearly throwing myself into the power of what I shall always call the family curse. Poor Cadman died far away. His was a painful career: it began full of hope and brightness; but drink ruined him, as it has ruined many others. Batten fell into evil ways, and disappeared from among the people who knew him.

But the greatest surprise I ever had in my life was in connection with Captain Scrutton, as I may continue to call him. The man whom I saw watching him, on the morning when I had my terrible walk after Mr. Fenwick had given my father's paper to me, was Mr. Tobin, a bee-keeper. But Mr. Tobin was formerly a detective, and had been employed, at the time of my father's death, in watching my uncle Kemp. It was a strange story which he had to tell about his visit to Cambridge. He met Mrs. Newfax in the street, and recognized her as Martha Bent, who had been convicted of robbing the vicarage at Bettenham, or attempting to rob it. When we compared

notes together, Mr. Tobin came to the conclusion that Mrs. Newfax had also recognized him, and had walked towards the cricket-ground to give some kind of warning to Captain Scrutton, who was my uncle Kemp, under an assumed name, and very much changed in appearance. The old detective's suspicions were aroused, and he watched the house where Mrs. Newfax lived. The captain had what he called a fit of the gout, but I remember how Cadman was accustomed to joke about it, and speak as if the captain was only pretending to be ill.

That morning which I have mentioned, Tobin had a good look at the captain for the first time, and in spite of the beard on the face, he recognized the man whom he had watched years before. He told Mr. Fenwick of the discovery, as he had told Ellis about Mrs. Newfax; and that had prevented Ellis going to the station to meet his father. Mr. Fenwick was thunderstruck at Tobin's information, and began to make inquiries about Scrutton. He asked me what kind of man he was, and what I had seen or heard of him. I could scarcely credit my ears when I learned that he was my uncle, the uncle who had thrown a blight upon my father's life. Mr. Fenwick called to see him, but was refused admission, on the ground of

the captain's illness. He wrote a brief note, however, in which he said, "Mr. Kemp Naresborough has been recognized. Would it not be better to have an interview with the guardian of his nephew and niece?" Nothing was said in the note about the burglary at Bettenham.

My uncle Kemp admitted his visitor, and a painful conversation ensued. I am not able to record what took place, as Mr. Fenwick scarcely ever referred to the matter, and never, as far as I can tell, repeated what was said when he stood face to face with the man who years before had put himself within the power of the law. Mr. Fenwick told me that my uncle had spent many years abroad, and that he had been deprived for a long time of alcoholic drinks. Whether he was in prison or not, I cannot say; but those years of deprivation had given some measure of strength to him. A return to old habits followed immediately upon his settlement in England, and, as I had seen, he was sinking into drunkenness again.

Mr. Fenwick tried to learn something about Mrs. Newfax, or Martha Bent, as she had been called in former times; but my uncle was reticent on this question. Tobin, however, said that they had been married many years but under assumed names.

Mr. Fenwick promised not to prosecute my uncle,

but bargained that he should leave Cambridge. I have never quite understood what position the so-called Captain Scrutton had occupied. He was a professional gambler, and he had to do with a firm of money-lenders. Victor Batten was not the only young man who had fallen into his hands, and been made to suffer for it.

The identity of my uncle was never made public; his reputation was not savoury enough to make me wish to publish abroad the relationship which existed between him and me. He disappeared suddenly, to the surprise of some and to the satisfaction of others. The last I heard about him was from Cadman, who wrote to me from a famous German watering-place which was at that time as notorious for its gambling hells as for its springs. Cadman's connection with Cambridge had been brought to a premature and painful conclusion. He professed to make light of this, but it was a terrible blow to him, and he went down-hill very fast after it happened.

In his letter he said:—"You were once my most promising pupil. I flattered myself that I should be able to coach you so that you might take a good degree at the festive board; but some malignant fate interfered, and you are still among the unenlightened and undistinguished disciples of the pump. I cannot

tell you how much I am grieved at this. Life would not have been lived in vain if it had been possible for me to point to you and say, 'I made a man of him.' I saw an old friend of yours not long ago, but he cut me dead. Who was it? Even that sweet and benignant counsellor of youth, Captain Scrutton. There is a Mrs. Scrutton too, and who should she be but that ancient mystery who once rejoiced in the name of Mrs. Newfax. The captain has married the widow; so now I suppose she has found the third volume which I am sure she was always looking for. But her eyes are still turned downward; and the captain is also skilled at not seeing people, for, as I have said, he completely ignored the existence of your humble servant. The son of Mars is somewhat worse for wear. Perhaps the waters do not agree with him; they do not agree with me. I do not pick up my strength as I ought to do. The doctor here recommends a long sea-voyage. I think all the doctors are alike about this anti-alcoholic mania. They want to stop my moderate allowance of grog. What humbugs you teetotalers are. Pardon me, I will except you, if you like, for I cannot forget that you were once my most promising pupil."

The writing was very unsteady, and I knew what

that meant. Poor Cadman! what a fine man he might have been, if he had not fallen a victim to drunkenness!

Thus pass away from this record first one and then another. How can I be thankful enough to God for the help which he has given me? Friends were raised up to watch over and guide me; and when I was longing for the darkness, I was made to see that the light which I despised was of priceless worth. Not unto me, but unto God, be all the praise and the glory!

Some time ago Ethel and I went to see Mr. and Mrs. Smiddens at the farm where we spent our earliest years. The good old farmer and his wife were delighted to see us. They were full of old reminiscences, and had a good account to give of their sons and daughters, all of whom are faithful to the principles in which they were trained at home.

There is no public-house in Naresborough now. Some of the old inhabitants, who spent much of their time in the "Pet Lamb," are very doleful about the change. It matters nothing to them that there is less poverty and misery than of old. But people are becoming wiser, and many of them are ready to co-operate in any scheme which promotes the sobriety

and welfare of mankind. We hear fewer regrets every year about the "good old times" when the Fold set a bad example to all the parish. But we must not be impatient. As Mr. Fenwick said not long ago at the opening of our new workman's club:—"When generations of people have been going wrong, and enjoying their perverseness, we must not expect them to recognize and admire the right in a moment. Our duty is to show, by living and constant example, that sobriety is best for individuals and communities. The right is with us, as ten thousand instances prove. We are in no doubt concerning our position, and we must strive so that the world shall be in no doubt concerning us."

THE END.